

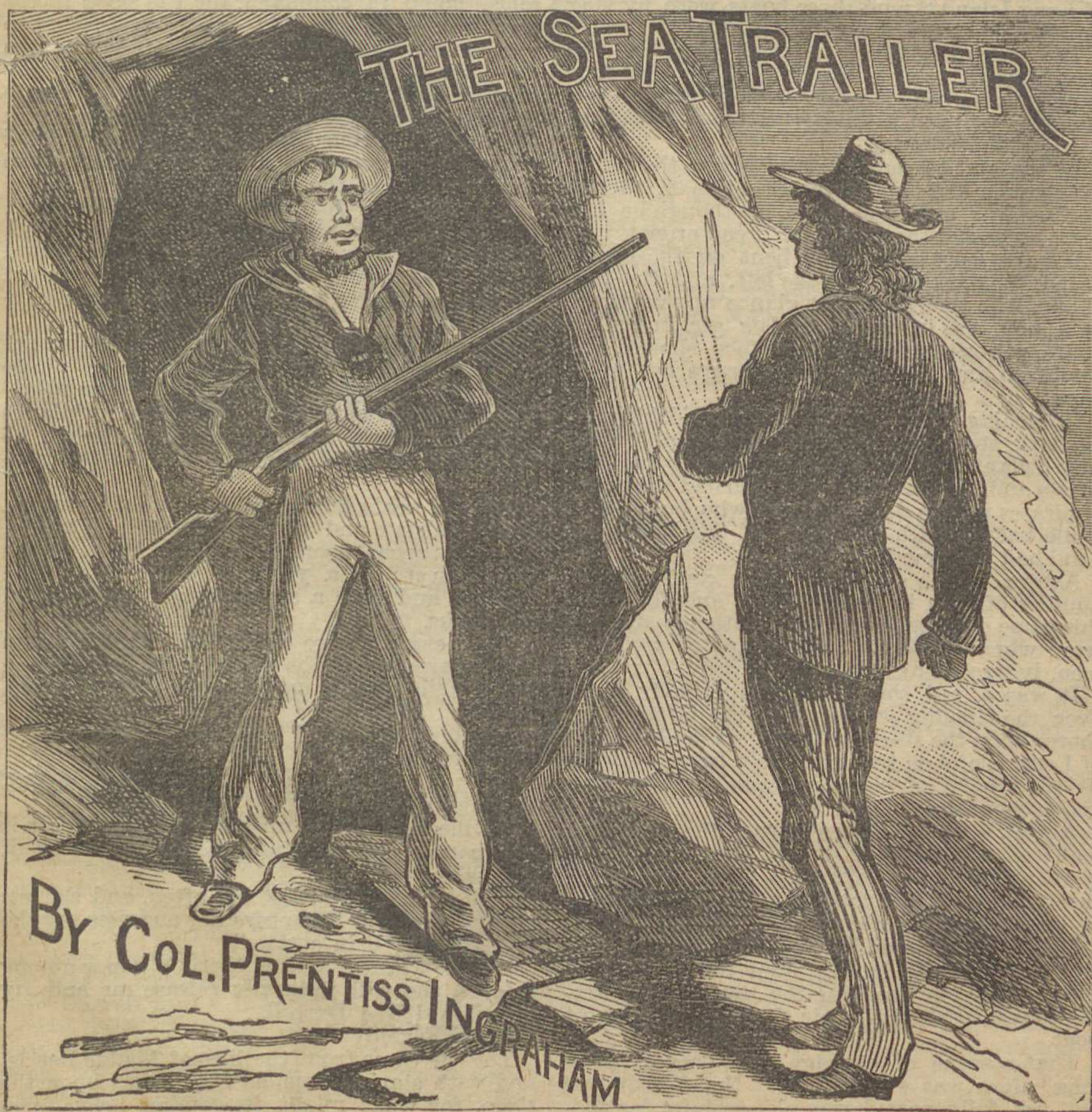
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"AH! WHO ARE YOU?" AND THE GUARD LEVELED HIS MUSKET

The Sea Trailer;

OR,

A VOW WELL KEPT.

A Sea and Shore Yarn of Love
and Revenge.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM,
AUTHOR OF "MERLE, THE MUTINEER," "MON-
TEZUMA, THE MERCILESS," "THE FLYING
YANKEE," ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

CAPTAIN KIT.

THE calm face of the moon looked down upon a strange and sad scene, for over the waters of Long Island Sound three boats were moving slowly along toward the distant city.

The one in advance, a small gig, had the other two in tow, a heavy pull for the four oarsmen who bent steadily to their work, their blades rising and falling with the monotonous swing of a pendulum.

In the gig, his hand resting upon the tiller, sat a young and handsome midshipman, though his face was pale and stern, as though he had recently passed through some dread ordeal.

His eyes were alternately bent on the course ahead, the dark shores to the left, and the face of one, who though at first glance appearing to be a boy, was in reality a fair girl in youth's attire, yet one whose fearless face showed she would do and dare all that a brave lad would dare.

Crouching down in front of the midshipman, his dark, stern face toward the moon, and wickedly defiant in spite of the irons that bound his wrists and ankles, was a man who had the brand of pirates resting upon him, and who but a short while before, with a number of his buccaneer band had been made captives.

Astern of the gig was a boat containing a number of men in double irons, and following this came a barge, a couple of fathoms distant, from which arose the low moans of wounded men, lying side by side with the dead.

It was a sad *cortege*, moving slowly along over the rippling waves, with the Connecticut shores upon the starboard quarters, and the hills of Long Island on the port, their base bordered by the ribbon of shining beach, serving as a girdle between land and water.

Ahead, a league distant, arose the frowning walls of a fort, rising out of the Sound, as it were, and with the rays of a lamp glimmering through a port, and casting a dancing pathway of light across the waves.

Click! click! sounded the oars in the rowlocks, and swish! swish! went the blades into the water, alone breaking the sounds of suffering that floated on the air from the sternmost boat.

That a scene of carnage had been enacted long before was evident; that the danger was not yet fully passed was also certain, for suddenly the keen eye of the midshipman fell upon an object that riveted his earnest gaze, for, out

from the shadow of an overhanging hill glided a small sloop, that had evidently long before discovered the boats upon the moonlit waters, and was now heading across their bows to cut them off.

"Ha! we are not yet out of danger, it seems, unless that is some guard-boat from the city patrolling the Sound," said the midshipman, and his remark caused every eye in the gig to turn upon the strange sail, the man in irons bending a searching gaze thereon, as though the sloop brought life or death to him, and the girl, in the sailor lad's suit and naval cap, saying in a low tone:

"Heaven grant it be no foe to us."

Straight across the bows of the gig the sloop headed, and it was evident that it was the intention of those on board to get a nearer view of those in the boats.

It was an important moment for the young midshipman in command, for the sloop might be a Sound vedette, sent out from the fort to reconnoiter, and it might be a craft sent on the same mission from some English cruiser in the vicinity, and, worse still, one of the small pirate or smuggling vessels that haunted the waters in the vicinity of New York at the time of which I write, for the scenes of my story are during the stirring years of the "War of 1812."

But friend or foe, Brete Fairfax, the middy, though a boy in years, possessed nerve enough to meet them as their coming required, and seeing that escape was impossible, he ordered his oarsmen to cease rowing and prepare for resistance.

It was a critical moment for the midshipman, for in the boats astern were two-score pirate prisoners, and by his side was a young and lovely girl who claimed his protection, while to resist an attack, should one be meditated, he had but four good men and true besides himself.

As the boats floated silently on the waters, Brete Fairfax and his men armed and ready, all eyes turned upon the coming craft, which was seen to be a yacht of some thirty tons burden, and with a score of men visible upon her decks.

With eager interest Ned Darrell, the pirate chief, gazed upon the approaching vessel, and then, while a grim smile passed over his face, he said:

"I think you and I are about to change positions, young sir."

"What do you mean?" asked Brete Fairfax, the middy.

"I mean that if I mistake not, that craft is commanded by Captain Kit, the Montauk smuggler."

"Ha! I have heard of her often, and she has eluded all efforts to capture her and men say she is a very devil in action."

"So I've heard, and as there is honor among thieves, she will naturally release me and my men," said Ned Darrell.

"God Forbid!"

The cry came from the lips of Madge Ferris, and with staring eyes he now gazed upon the sloop, for what might its coming bring upon her!

"Aha, my fair maid of Perth, you would hate

to see these irons taken from my wrists, and you in my power instead of I in yours; but it will be, for that is the Will-o-the-Wisp, the craft of Captain Kit, a woman bolder than any man, and they say, as heartless as sin. A short while more, my beauty, and you are in my power."

"Hold!" and the cold muzzle of a pistol was pressed hard against the temple of the pirate leader, while in low, earnest tones the midshipman continued:

"Swear not to betray, that this lady is other than she seems, a youth, and that if myself and men are allowed to go free, no word of yours will prevent her accompanying me, or I will scatter your brains over this boat, be the consequences to myself what they may; do you swear?"

"You hold me in your power, and I have nothing else to do," was the surly reply.

"So be it; mind that you keep your oath—hark! the yacht hails," and across the waters came in clear, ringing tones:

"Ho, those boats!"

"Ahoy the sloop," answered Brete Fairfax.

"What boats are those?" and the yacht swept up into the wind and lay to, a cable's length distant.

"I am a United States naval officer, returning to New York with prisoners."

"From the schooner that went up the Sound an hour since?"

"Yes."

"What schooner was it?"

"It is *my* place to question, yours to answer; what sloop is that?" called out the midshipman, determined to put a bold face upon the matter, and assume his rights as an American officer.

A clear, silvery laugh broke forth in answer, and then came the reply:

"*The Will-o'-the-Wisp, Captain Kit, the Smuggler of Montauk!*"

CHAPTER II.

THE SMUGGLERS OF MONTAUK.

A LOW moan came from poor Madge, at the reply from the strange vessel, and something very like a muttered curse passed the lips of Brete Fairfax; but he answered promptly:

"Surrender, or I will fire into you!"

Again that silvery laugh floated over the waters, and instantly followed the deep tones of Ned Darrell, the pirate chief:

"Ho! the sloop; come to our aid; they dare not resist you."

"Ay, ay," and quickly the sloop swung round on the starboard tack, and came dashing swiftly along toward the boats.

"Coxswain, her decks are crowded, and we dare not resist, so we will have to take our chances; but for you, sir," and the midshipman turned to Ned Darrell, "if it were not cowardly to strike a man in irons, I would mar that handsome face of yours for life."

Ned Darrell gave a light laugh, and the next moment the sloop rushed by the boats, and not thirty feet away, while upon her decks were visible two small guns, and some twenty men, all with their muskets leveled and ready for action.

At the helm stood a slender form, dressed in a

jacket trimmed with gold braid, pants stuck in top boots, and a slouch hat with red plume, while arms glittered in the belt around the small waist.

"Now, sir, do you surrender?" came in determined, distinct tones.

"I have no other alternative," was the quiet reply of Brete Fairfax, and instantly the sharp bows of the sloop swept round, and the next moment the pretty craft lay quiet upon the waters, while her daring commander stood gazing in silence upon the party in the boats.

"What was the trouble upon the schooner that swept up the Sound a while since?" asked the fair commander, and the moonlight falling full upon her face, both the midshipman and Madge noticed that she was exquisitely beautiful, scarcely over twenty years of age, and possessed a graceful and well-knit form.

A closer look discovered that her jacket and pants were of black broadcloth, and that her hands and feet were remarkably small and incased in well-fitting gloves and boots, while a sash of gold thread was around her waist.

"The trouble was," said the midshipman, in no very pleasant tones, in answer to the question of Captain Kit, the daring female smuggler, "that the merchant schooner, *Maid of Perth*, was cut out from her anchorage by Darrell, the pirate, and his men, who attempted to put to sea and turn her into a buccaneering craft; but they were caught in their own trap."

"Ah! and through your pluck, young sir?"

"No, through the pluck of a better man; one by name Carl Manners, who was unjustly sent to prison, but escaped, and, coming on board disguised as a naval officer, and with what I believed men-of-war's-men at his back, readily deceived me, who, with my four men, had charge of the schooner, and concealing themselves in the hold, after we passed the forts, seized the *Maid of Perth*, and have gone to sea in her."

"A bold deed. I have heard of that young man; a mere boy, who killed the rich Talbot Trevor, and was known as the Boy Runaway; and he seized the schooner and has gone to sea, you say?"

"Yes, leaving me Darrell and his men, prisoners in my charge."

"And you are a naval officer, who had charge of the schooner, since her late escapades that brought the suspicion of the Government upon her?"

"Yes, my name is Brete Fairfax, and I am a midshipman in the navy."

"I have heard of you, too; in fact, it is to my interest to be posted regarding all the navy officers; but, what will this Carl Manners, the escaped convict, do with the *Maid of Perth*?"

"Turn her into a privateer, I believe."

"He'll be hunted as a pirate; but if half the stories told of him are true, he'll make a name for himself. He certainly made a hot fight of it to seize the schooner, as I myself heard, and if he had not taken her, I would have done so myself soon; but, where is this Darrell, the pirate?"

"I am here, Captain Kit!" and Darrell stood up in the boat, his chains clanking around him.

"You have gotten yourself into trouble, sir;

for your deeds of late will hang you," said Captain Kit, quietly.

"Yes, if you do not save us, Captain Kit."

"Ah! I never strike a blow against my Government, except in such cases as running in silks, wines, and other luxuries, and it would not be right for me to interfere with this young officer's duty."

"What! would you, who are an outlaw yourself permit myself and men to die at the yard-arm, when it lies in your power to save us?" asked Ned Darrell, warmly.

"No, I hate to see even pirates die, so suppose I must save you; but upon one condition."

"Name it."

"That you pledge yourselves to do as I wish."

"Willingly! Your terms?"

"You will know anon; now, sir," and she turned to the midshipman, "how many men have you?"

"Five of my own, and five wounded of Carl Manners's crew."

"The balance are pirates, eh?"

"Yes."

"Those I will relieve you of; take the others in one of the boats and continue on your way, and don't always believe it, when you hear Captain Kit called a very devil, for you see I cheerfully release you and your men."

"I thank you, sincerely. Coxswain, draw the second boat alongside and we'll make the transfer," ordered the midshipman, and then the deep voice of Ned Darrell broke in, with:

"Captain Kit, there is a youth here I would like to keep with me."

His eyes turned upon Madge, and he rested his hand upon her shoulder.

"Remember your oath, sir!" said Brete Fairfax in a low, stern voice.

"An oath under compulsion is not binding," sneered Ned Darrell, and he again asked:

"May I take the boy, Captain Kit?"

The woman saw that there was something going that she did not understand, and asked:

"Does the boy wish to go with you?"

"No, oh, no! I am not a boy, but a girl, and I plead to you not to let Ned Darrell get me into his power," cried Madge, piteously.

"Ah, the plot unravels! Who are you?" asked Captain Kit with interest.

"It is Miss Ferris, the maid of Perth, and she prefers to remain under my protection," now announced Brete Fairfax.

"Rumor has not belied you, for I have often heard of your beauty. You are free to go with whom you please."

"God bless you forever, be your sins what they may!" broke fervently from the lips of Madge, while Darrell said anxiously:

"But, Captain Kit, this girl is my prize, and—"

"If you cannot win her by honorable means, you shall not by dishonorable, Captain Ned Darrell, so be content that I have saved you from the yard-arm and drop all argument."

"I am content," he said aloud, but added in a low tone:

"Madge Ferris, you shall yet be mine—I swear it!"

Madge shrunk from him and sprung into the

other boat, into which the coxswain had transferred the five wounded men who had belonged to the crew of Carl Manners.

"Is all ready?" called out Captain Kit.

"Ay, ay," promptly answered the middy.

"Then cast loose, and a pleasant cruise back to the city to you, sir," cried the woman commander, and the boats and the sloop swung apart, the four oars dropped into the water, and once more Brete Fairfax was on his way, havenward, while the Will-o'-the-Wisp, with the boats in tow flew swiftly away, heading up the Sound.

CHAPTER III.

THE RETURN.

CAPTAIN ROYAL DEAN, the young and handsome commander of the war-vessel Sea Wizard, was just enjoying his morning nap, between sunrise and breakfast, when there suddenly appeared before him the haggard face of his favorite midshipman, Brete Fairfax.

"Well, Brete, what brings you here, and who did you leave in charge of the schooner?" he asked, rubbing his eyes with surprise to thoroughly awaken himself.

"Been relieved from duty, sir."

"Relieved, and by whom? I gave no such orders."

"No, sir, I guess you didn't, for Ned Darrell, the pirate, and his crew of cut-throats—"

"Ha! they have cut the schooner out?" and Royal Dean sprung from his berth and seized his clothing in more haste than was his custom by far.

"They did, sir; cut her out in masterly style, but she was recaptured in a more superior style still."

"Ah, she is then not in his possession?"

"Captain Dean, it won't do any good to dress now, so if you'll go back to bed I'll tell you the story, and if I am to blame, you can judge," and in a clear forcible way Brete Fairfax told the whole story, from the coming on board of Carl Manners, the Boy Runaway, disguised as Lieutenant Carleton of the navy; his telling him of an intended attack upon the schooner by Darrell and his band, and hiding in the hold of the vessel until they had passed the forts, when they retook the Maid of Perth from the pirates, and the fugitive convict had boldly put to sea as a privateer.

"A privateer! he will be branded as a pirate, Fairfax, as soon as the affair is known."

"No, sir, the schooner was presented to him by Madge, the fair maid of Perth, who you know is its owner, and she had the Letter of Marque papers for it all made out, so that will clear him, though, of course, he is still an escaped convict, and a fugitive."

"Let him win a name, as Carl Manners assuredly will, and that stain will be taken off of him; but after capturing the schooner, what then, Brete, for I am most anxious to learn all?" asked the handsome young Captain of the Sea Wizard.

Again the youth went on with his eventful story of his returning with the prisoners, and the dead and wounded, and the rescue by Captain Kit, the Girl Smuggler, and his release.

"This is a remarkable affair, Fairfax, and I

know not what to say, yet I cannot blame you in the slightest, for you saw Carl Manners on board here and was introduced to him in his disguise of Lieutenant Carleton of the navy, while you knew the valuable service he rendered us, and naturally trusted him when he came on board the schooner."

"I was astounded, sir, I assure you, when his disguise was removed and I saw in the supposed officer Carl Manners the escaped convict; but the schooner, as I told you, was given to him by the maid of Perth herself, and I think he will make a name."

"He certainly will, Fairfax; but we must go to the admiral and report the whole affair, even to who is the one that now has command of the schooner; yet I will ask him to keep the secret from the public, for a while at least."

"And, Captain Dean, I have a favor to ask of you and the admiral."

"Well, name it, Fairfax."

"It is to be allowed to hunt down this Ned Darrell in my own way, for I have a plan arranged, though what it is I do not now care to tell; only give me a few months' leave of absence, and see if I cannot render an account of myself."

"I know that you can, my young friend, and I will grant you the leave, and ask the admiral to approve it; but you must do nothing rash, for I cannot afford to lose you; now we will have breakfast and go to the flagship; but are the wounded men on board with you?"

"No, sir, I left them at the hospital, and the coxswain I sent on to Amboy with Miss Ferris."

"She's a beautiful girl, Brete, and your acquaintance has begun in a most romantic way, so watch well your heart, for I have heard her called a desperate flirt," and the sly glance his captain bent on the midshipman, brought the color flaming into his face; but he answered slyly:

"If I catch the love-fever, sir, I think I could tell where I caught it, judging from the frequent trips the captain's gig makes to the Keel and Anchor Inn."

"Send Lieutenant Murdock to me," broke in Royal Dean, feeling that the shot of the midshipman went home, and when the youth departed upon his errand, he muttered:

"Egad, the lad is right; I have got the fever myself; but who could help loving Clarette Manners, if her brother is a convict and fugitive from justice?"

"But I will go by the inn and tell her what has occurred, so that she need not feel anxious regarding her brother."

An hour after the captain's gig grated on the sandy beach of Staten Island, in front of the Keel and Anchor, and Royal Dean and Brete Fairfax sprung ashore and were soon seated in the parlor of the inn, where they were immediately joined by both Clarette Manners and Agnes Benedict, the pretty daughter of the landlord of the hospitable wayside tavern.

Presenting the middy to the maidens, Royal Dean bade him tell the story of the cutting out of the schooner, and all that had transpired, and then they took their leave, the midshipman, on the way back to the boat, remarking slyly:

"I wouldn't blame any man for loving Miss Manners, and, as for myself I'm a little mixed, for I like Miss Agnes Benedict, fully as well as I do Miss Madge, the maid of Perth."

"I fear you are a sad case, Fairfax."

"Ah, no, captain, I only have a sailor's heart," and springing into the boat the order was given to "let fall," and the prow was headed for the flagship, where the admiral listened with surprise and deep interest to the midshipman's story, and then said:

"I do not condemn you, Mr. Fairfax, for signaling the schooner out past the forts, when, as you believed, ordered so to do by a superior officer, and I hope, after the gallant recapture by that young Manners, who has had my sympathy in his misfortunes, the craft will win a name that will get him a pardon; but you say you have a plan to entrap the smuggler sloop, and Darrell's band?"

"Yes, sir, and I hope to give a good account of myself."

"No doubt you will, for you certainly passed through the dangers of last night, with flying colors; but first run up the Sound with your captain on the cutter, to show him the exact locality the smugglers pounced upon you, and when you return I freely approve your leave of absence indefinitely."

Both officers thanked the admiral warmly, and, after a few minutes longer of conversation they returned to the Sea Wizard, that at once spread her sails, and flew up the harbor on the way to Long Island Sound, her captain hoping to catch sight of Captain Kit's famous Will-o'-the-Wisp.

CHAPTER IV.

A FATAL LOVE.

IN a gorgeously-furnished apartment, in the then fashionable part of the city of New York, sat a young girl of perhaps twenty years of age, and with a face whose touching sadness almost marred its beauty.

She was attired in a rich morning wrapper, wore jewels in her ears and upon her hands, and was idly gazing out of the window upon the busy street, though her thoughts were not with the din and turmoil before her.

In her hand she clutched a letter, which ever and anon she read, now with flashing eyes, and then with tears blinding her vision.

"DEAR META:—

"I will soon come to bid you farewell, perhaps a lasting farewell, for I am compelled to leave you, as I dare not remain here after what I have done.

"But I will leave you money, to defray your expenses back to your home, and once there you can forget that you ever met

"NED DARRELL."

Such was the missive she clutched in her hand, and after reading it once again, she cried bitterly:

"And this is the end; and this is my reward; oh, Ned, Ned, you have broken my poor heart, for I gave up home, parents, all for you."

Dropping her head in her hands she sobbed bitterly, until the door suddenly opened and before her stood the writer of the cruel letter.

She gazed a moment upon his dark, handsome,

but stern, cruel face, and then sprung toward him.

"Oh, Ned, my own darling, you will not desert me thus; your letter was only a hoax, yet oh, how cruel a one," and she twined her arms around his neck.

"Meta, I wrote that letter in good faith: I have to leave you, and—*forever*."

"No! no! no! you cannot do that; you will not do so great a wrong."

"Stern duty bids me seem cruel, Meta; but listen while I tell you that I am a hunted man—see, on that chair lies the false beard I am compelled to wear, for the hounds of the law are upon my steps, ever since the attack on the cutter some nights ago.

"I have now but to fly to sea, and on an armed deck I dread no man."

"A *pirate*! Oh God have mercy."

The beautifully molded arms loosened their grasp, and the woman sunk in a heap upon the floor.

"I've a mind to leave her now, for I hate scenes, and when she becomes conscious again I know there'll be one," said the heartless man; but he bent over her, and raising her up, carried her to a sofa, and with restoratives soon brought her out of her swoon.

"Ned, thank God you have not left me; you will not; will you?—may I not say it, just *this* once—*my husband*?"

"Meta, have I not forbidden you to speak of me thus? Have I not told you that there were reasons why I dare not call you wife?"

"Only that once, Ned, for it is hard to be a wife and denied the name, for the world looks upon me as a guilty thing, while I am not, am I, darling?" and she looked pleadingly into his face.

Thrice he walked across the floor, his brow knitted, his lips tightly compressed; then he turned to her:

"Meta, suppose I were to tell you that you were not really my wife—what then?"

"What then? Oh! God, it would craze my brain, Ned Darrell; it would drive me a raving maniac through the streets; but you will not tell me that—you cannot—you *dare* not; for remember, Ned, when I was a wee little girl I loved you with all my heart, and though my parents and the neighbors warned me, I would not give you up.

"In all the years you were away at sea, did I forget you?"

"Oh, no! and when you returned, dismissed from the navy, for killing your superior officer in a duel, did I turn against you when the others did?"

"Oh, no! and when, still a girl in my 'teens, you bade me leave home, parents, friends, all for you, and become your wife, did I not fly with you into the wide world I knew not of, and have I not lived here in loneliness, days and weeks and months, alone in a large city?"

"And would I believe, until you told me with your own lips, that the rumors about you were true and that you were an outlaw?"

"Oh, no, Ned Darrell, through my whole life I have clung to you, through all ill-repute, and even now, when you boldly assert that you are to become a freebooter—ay, a pirate upon the

high seas—I will not desert you, if only you will let me go with you."

"But you cannot, Meta."

"But I *will*, Ned Darrell; for though I believed you when you said you were a merchant and owned several coasting vessels, and I found you to be a gambler and an adventurer instead, I did not desert you, and I will not now, even though you be a pirate, for outlaw though you be, you are my—I will say it, Ned—*my husband*."

"My poor Meta, do not let me deceive you more, for you *are not my wife*."

"Ned Darrell, you lie!"

The beautiful eyes flashed fire, and springing to her feet, she drew her form proudly up to its full height, and with hand outstretched, looked into his face.

Like the guilty wretch he was, he cowered before her, but said faintly:

"I tell only the truth, Meta, for our marriage was an illegal one."

She strove hard to speak, her lips moved, but no words came from them, while her eyelids drooped, and with a shriek, wrung from her heart, she fell heavily to the floor.

"Great God! the shock has killed her, and I must not be found here," he said, selfishly thinking of himself and not of the beautiful woman his words had just caused to drop like dead in her tracks.

Resuming his disguise hastily, he fled from the room, leaving that slender, graceful form still lying where it had fallen, while he muttered, as he walked rapidly along:

"She will recover and return home; but it were even better were she to die, for I have sworn that Madge, the maid of Perth, shall be my wife, by fair or foul means—yes, and I vow it again."

CHAPTER V.

A CREWLESS CRAFT.

WHEN the schooner, Maid of Perth, under command of Carl Manners, the Boy Fugitive, sailed up Long Island Sound with a fair breeze, she carried only her daring young commander and his men; but though she was an unarmed vessel, with a gallant crew, well supplied with small-arms, her daring captain felt little doubt but that he could soon place guns upon her deck, and it was with a joyous heart that he trod the quarter-deck of the swift craft, and with his first officer, Alston Brooks, plotted and planned for the future.

That there were two or more English vessels guarding the entrance to the Sound, and lying off Montauk Point, Carl Manners knew, and the gantlet of their fire he would have to run, as they were large and heavily armed, and it would be madness to attempt to carry them by boarding.

Getting everything in shipshape condition, appointing his sub-officers, and forming his watches and boat-crews, occupied until a late hour, and finding that it would be impossible to reach the open sea before dawn, Carl ran into an inlet on the Long Island shore and dropped anchor close to the beach, determined to run out during the following night.

In the mean time the Sea Wizard had started

on her cruise into the Sound to capture the smuggler craft, Will-o'-the-Wisp, and to retake the Maid of Perth by the admiral's orders, for he did not admit the legality of the sailing of the schooner without having reported to him as commander of the naval station, and his instructions were to overhaul her if possible, though he added:

"I will not regret it if you do not."

Rushing through Hell Gate like a mad racer, the Sea Wizard held on out of East River into the open Sound, passed the forts, and with everything drawing, reached the inlet out of which the Will-o'-the-Wisp had come, just as the sun was sinking.

Running close in, a boat was sent ashore under Midshipman Fairfax; but a search revealed neither smuggling craft or smugglers, and the middy came to the conclusion that the outlaw sloop was only temporarily lying in wait in those waters, and so reporting to Captain Dean, the cutter stood on up the Sound once more, closely watching the shores, and running in as near as the pilot dare go.

"Sail ho!"

The cry startled all, although every one on the cutter was looking for and hoping for the sight of a sail.

And out of an inlet, half a league ahead, glided a majestic schooner, her white hull and sails looking like a phantom ship upon the waters.

"Crowd the cutter with canvas, Mr. Murdock; we must get a closer look at that fellow," cried Royal Dean, and instinctively every man sprung to his post, while every stitch of canvas was spread that would draw.

But steadily on held the strange craft, and, if seeing, not caring for the cutter, until, having reached a good offing from the land, she suddenly squared away toward the ocean.

"Captain Dean, do you notice anything strange about that craft, sir?" asked Brete Fairfax, who had been narrowly watching her through his glass.

"Yes, she appears more like the specter of a vessel than the reality, though of course I am not given to superstition."

"There, now, sir, look as the moon rises, and casts its light upon her," persisted the midshipman.

"Ha! she is the image of the Maid of Perth."

"In hull, and partially in rig, sir; but the Maid was painted black."

"True, and the hull of yonder schooner is white, and that is what gives her such a spectral look; and yonder craft carries a fore-top-sail large enough for a brig and an immense flying jib, while there is a yard for a square-sail, none of which the Maid of Perth had," continued Royal Dean, gazing intently at her through his glass.

"There is something else, sir, that you have failed to observe."

"What is it, Fairfax?" asked the captain, with interest.

"First, with all her canvas set, she sails very slow for a vessel of her beautiful model and rakish rig, and, before she stood away upon her present course, and since, I have not seen a man visible upon her decks."

"Ha! you are right in both particulars, Fairfax, for we are gaining rapidly upon her, and not even her helmsman is visible; what does it mean?"

"I do not know, sir," answered the middy, thoughtfully, and both officers continued watching the schooner with increased interest, while the cutter gained upon her at a rate that threatened to soon overhaul the strange craft.

Nearer and nearer the cutter drew to the spectral vessel, which seemed to make no effort to escape, and going up into the fore cross-trees, Royal Dean took a long and searching look at her.

Descending to the deck he approached Lieutenant Murdock and Brete Fairfax, who were conversing together, and said:

"Yonder craft has no one at her helm, and not a soul visible upon her decks, and yet she stands on her course as unswervingly as we do; what can it mean?"

"It is a mystery I am unable to solve, Captain Dean, and her strange appearance is beginning to impress the men disagreeably," answered the lieutenant.

"I must rouse them out of that, or they'll think they are in chase of the Flying Dutchman; go forward, Mr. Fairfax, and throw a shot over yon ghostly craft, and we'll see if we cannot bring a crew on her decks."

The midshipman obeyed with alacrity, for he wished to break the spell that he felt was creeping over officers and men, by the strange vessel ahead, sailing without a single person being visible upon her.

Calling upon the crew of the gun to load it, he himself trained it and applied the torch.

The red glare of the discharge, the deep boom of the gun, and the rushing roar of the solid shot, momentarily cast superstitious dread aside; but when each one had eagerly watched the effect, beheld the shot pass over the schooner and bury itself in the waters beyond, while no crew appeared, as those on the cutter had hoped, rushing on deck, there was a still greater dread felt, and the low words went from lip to lip:

"It's a death craft!"

"Ha! she is leaving us! dropping us as though we were standing still!" suddenly cried Royal Dean, and his words were true, for the strange craft, without setting an extra inch of canvas, or the appearance of a man on deck, was now rushing forward with a speed that threatened to drop the cutter far astern, in spite of her swift-sailing qualities.

"Forward, there!"

"Ay, ay, sir," answered Brete Fairfax.

"Give her another shot, and this time aim at her."

The order of the captain was obeyed, and the shot passed through the square foresail of the stranger, yet did no harm, that any one on the cutter could discover.

"Capt'in, don't feel hard ag'in' ther lads, sir, but they has sent me aft to ask yer, please, sir, don't fire on that craft no more, for it hain't natural to, sir," and an old seaman, whose head was silvered by three-score years, saluted politely, as he came forward and faced his commander.

"Why, Jack, do you think she is a specter?"

"Yes, capt'in, she are a death-craft, and it don't do an honest ship's crew any good to meet her on ther waters, as you will see, sir."

"Well, Jack, I'll crowd the cutter with all she'll carry, and see if we can't get a closer look at yonder crewless craft; all hands ahoy to set sail!" called out Royal Dean, and nimbly the seamen sprung to obey, and soon, under the pressure of her increased canvas the Sea Wizard shot ahead with greater speed.

CHAPTER VI.

RUNNING THE GANTLET.

BUT, though the cutter had increased her speed in a great degree, and the breeze growing stronger, caused her to forge ahead and carry a huge bone in her teeth, the weird-looking craft that led her, still gained perceptibly, and without an effort having been made to set a sail, or trim her canvas; in fact, not the sharpest eye, or cleanest glass on the Sea Wizard, had yet been able to discover a form moving upon the decks of the stranger.

"Sail ho!"

"Whereaway?" called out Royal Dean glancing up at the man in the fore-cross-trees.

"Just in the moon's wake, sir; two leagues away," answered the lookout.

"Ay, ay, I see her; it is a large cruiser, and an Englishman; now, my specter craft, we'll see if you are not a ghostly contrivance rigged up by the British to frighten honest American sailors," said Royal Dean.

"The cruiser has put about, sir, and is standing down toward the crewless craft," said Lieutenant Murdock.

"You are right, and the schooner is falling off to give her a wide berth; but in the name of Neptune, who is steering that vessel?"

"I give it up, sir, for I do not know who are working her sails, too, for you see they are worked."

"I believe old Jack is half right; but we'll soon see," muttered Royal Dean, and he was raising his glass to his eyes, when once more came the cry:

"Sail ho!"

"Ay, ay."

"She's a frigate, sir, just creeping out from under Montauk Point."

"I see her; keep your eyes open for other sails, sir," and turning to Lieutenant Murdock, he continued in a low tone:

"We are running into a hornets' nest."

"And so is the schooner ahead."

"True, and she is changing her course once more, as though to run the gantlet between the two British vessels; can she be an American privateer, masquerading for some purpose?"

"In hull and rig, excepting she is painted white, and the squaresail and large flying jib, she is strangely like the Maid of Perth to me, sir," said Brete Fairfax.

"You are right, Brete; but—by Jove! it may be one of Carl Manners's clever tricks to run by the British fleet; but, in Heaven's name, how does she work without a crew?—Ha! there goes a gun from the frigate."

"And another from the sloop-of-war; now we'll see if the ghost will vanish before English iron," said Lieutenant Murdock, and, as he

spoke the red glare of the guns illumined the waters, and then a deep roar echoed from the Montauk hills with many a rumble.

But unheeding the shots that flew over her the strange schooner held on to sea, while each moment the firing grew hotter and hotter, and the iron hail fell over and around her, though, seemingly bearing a charmed life, no harm was done her beautiful rigging and hull.

Coming toward a common center, with the weird-looking schooner rushing between them, and distant from each the half of a league, the two British cruisers seemed to feel that unless they could cripple her badly, she would escape to sea, and louder and louder resounded the guns, and fiercer and fiercer flew the iron shots.

"She is not English, that is certain, and therefore I will strike a blow in her aid, be she specter or real; give yonder frigate a touch of our metal, Mr. Murdock."

The heavy pivot-gun of the Sea Wizard roared forth angrily, and well aimed, the shot was heard to crash in upon the decks of the British vessel, which seemed wholly taken by surprise, as, in watching the ghostly schooner, it was evident that the cutter had not been discovered.

"Now give the sloop-of-war our compliments!" cried Royal Dean, and again the pivot-gun raised its brazen voice, and the true aim of the lieutenant caused the crew of the Sea Wizard to cheer wildly.

"Well aimed, Murdock, and it is a surprise to the Britishers, and the crewless craft is taking advantage of it to forge ahead; but we'll get it soon, so stand ready all! Head about, helmsman!"

The cutter swept around gracefully, but while yet in stays, the two British vessels poured a fire upon her, that flew disagreeably near the decks.

"We dare not cope with yonder huge bulldog, Fairfax; but I'll be content to take a few bruises, to let yonder crewless craft escape to sea, for the more I look at her, the more am I convinced that Carl Manners is upon her deck."

"And so I think, sir, and he has used a clever ruse to escape, for he knows, if believed to be a death-craft, no English gunner will aim to hit him; see, he is almost out of range of the sloop, which is now standing on after us, while the frigate continues the chase; there, we get it again."

And, whatever the cause of the crewless craft escaping unhurt by the fire of the British vessel, it is certain that the same did not exist in the case of the cutter, for the cruiser's second shot brought two seamen to the deck, and tore an ugly hole in the bulwarks.

"We must get out of this, or he'll hurt us fatally; but give him a parting salute, Murdock!" cried Royal Dean, and the pivot stern gun of the Sea Wizard opened rapidly upon the pursuing Englishman: but, in twenty minutes, it was evident that the crewless craft had escaped unharmed to sea, and that the cutter would not fall a prize to the British, for she was dropping her pursuer astern as rapidly as she had been distanced by the vessel with the crew. He insisted upon calling a

CHAPTER VII.

THE SECRET SOLVED.

WITH a speed that seemed marvelous, and added to a belief in her spectral qualities on board the British frigate, the crewless schooner sped on into the open sea, rapidly gaining upon her huge adversary in chase, and unharmed still by the rapid fire poured upon her.

But having once dropped her so far astern that merely a shadowy outline of the frigate was visible, there was a sudden change on the schooner's decks, for a shrill whistle was heard, and out of the hold and cabin came some sixty gallant fellows, while upon the quarter-deck stood two forms whom I will describe to the reader, who has not met them in the "Boy Runaway."

One of the two was Carl Manners, whose escape from prison had gained for him the name of the Boy Runaway; and a handsome, dashing fellow he was, well-formed, fearless, and with a face, though youthful, already stamped with the sorrows, cares and bitterness of manhood.

Feeling that at heart he was guiltless of crime in killing Talbot Trevor, and that the influence and wealth of the family, with bygone hatred, had alone made him a convict, he did not hesitate to make his escape through the earnest entreaties and aid of Alston Brooks and his young wife, and, though a fugitive from justice, he determined to strike a blow in his country's defense, and at the same time hunt down the man who had so wronged him—Hugh Trevor, who had placed him in prison, thereby breaking his mother's heart, and dogged him with a hatred that had caused Carl Manners to make a solemn vow to trail his bitter foe to his doom wherever he found him upon sea or land.

By his side stood Alston Brooks, the reformed gambler, and the one to whom Carl Manners owed his escape, and now the first lieutenant of the Sea Trailer, as she was rechristened.

"Well, Alston, that was a grand idea of yours, painting the schooner white, and rigging her sails and helm so that they could be worked with no one visible on deck, but I feared the fire of the British would wound us at one time," said Carl Manners.

"I never saw such bad firing; but I really believe our ghostly appearance unnerved the gunners, and it will soon go the world over that a crewless specter craft is cruising on the American coast, and my word for it, that it will help us amazingly; but what is our course now?" answered Alston Brooks.

"First to arm the schooner, and then to find Hugh Trevor, at the same time cruising against British vessels."

"Then you are determined to attack Trevor, though he carries the commission of an American privateersman?"

"Yes, I will trail him down, and if he will meet me personally that I may keep my vow and right. If he wrongs me, it shall end there, with his death or mine; but if he refuses, I shall boldly attack his vessel, and may the best man win."

"And shall you capture his craft?"

"I'll re-gain her, under his first officer, and hang him by the rear of this vessel."

"Madge Ferris has appropriately named our vessel then, in calling her the Sea Trailer."

"Yes, Alston, the name struck me forcibly when she said it, and when our guns are once on deck, we will christen her under her new name."

"But where are we to get those same guns, Captain Manners?"

"Take them," was the stern reply, and Carl Manners raised his glass and swept the sea for a few moments, and then he said:

"Ned Darrell spoke of a deserted fort on the Maine coast, where there were some guns, left there years ago, and I've a mind to cruise northward, and search the shores down to discover the spot, hoping, in the mean time to fall in with some English craft of our own size that we can overhaul and arm ourselves from."

"Well, shall I head for the Maine coast?"

"Yes; no, we will go still further east; head for Halifax, and, if we do not find a prize off that port, we'll run down the Maine coast in search of the old fort, for, until we are armed we'll have to depend for protection wholly upon our speed and specter-like appearance."

"I have more confidence in the former, as the Sea Trailer can show a clean pair of heels to any vessel afloat, I believe; but then spectral crafts at sea are much dreaded, as are ghosts ashore, for I do not think there is a sailor living but what dreads to see the Flying Dutchman."

"As I told you, Ashton, the night of my escape from prison, when you landed near the Haunted Mansion on Staten Island, it is the living, not the dead, that I fear, and our own appearance shows how nearly we can approach the supernatural, for every man on those British cruisers, and on the Sea Wizard too, I believe will swear we were a phantom vessel."

"It was the dropping of the drag we had out, and dashing ahead so rapidly, that made the Sea Wizard's crew so dread us, I guess, and the increasing our speed without setting a sail or showing a man was enough to astonish them; but is not that a sail off yonder?"

"Yes, I have been watching it some time, and now, as she goes about, I see her distinctly; it is a brig, and she is keeping off to give us a wide berth, but we'll have a nearer look at her," and Carl stepped to the helm and put the schooner away in pursuit of the brig, which it was evident had discovered them, and was making an effort to escape.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MIDDY'S ADVENTURE.

WHEN the Sea Wizard put back down the Sound, the sloop-of-war that gave chase soon discovered that it was useless to attempt to overhaul the nimble-heeled craft, and gave it up, seeing which Royal Dean slackened sail, and said:

"Now I am in this neighborhood, Fairfax, I intend to wait until daylight, and search the coast, for I've an idea that your friend, Captain Kit, has her haunts somewhere in the locality of yonder hill," and the captain pointed to a high point of land that jutted out into the Sound, promising a safe harborage beyond.

Under easy sail the Sea Wizard glided in under the shadow of the land and quietly dropped

anchor, when the adventurous midshipman asked for a boat and two men to go ashore.

"You can have the gig, Brete, and if the Englishmen cruise up this way, I'll fire a gun to call you on board; but don't be rash, my boy," and Royal Dean laid his hand upon the shoulder of the youth.

"Oh, no, sir, I am always cautious," and the midshipman went over the side into the boat, which had been brought to the gangway, and over the moonlit waters the two oarsmen pulled at a steady stroke landward.

Once in the shadow of the overhanging land, Brete Fairfax put his tiller hard down, and headed away in another direction, muttering:

"It was upon yonder hill; under that tree."

"Did you see any one ashore, sir?" asked old sailor Jack, one of the oarsmen, and whose age gave him liberties other of his messmates dare not take.

"Yes, I distinctly saw a person through my glass, standing under yonder tree, and that is why I wished to come ashore. It looked like a woman."

"Petticoats is dangerous to fool with, Master Fairfax, and I'd slacken sail afore I'd run boldly on 'em, for there's allus breakers around whar they is."

"So I've been told, Jack; but I'll risk the breakers to discover what that woman is doing here at night, and alone."

"Guess she's got company near, sir; womens isn't much on cruisin' alone, for they ginerally has a consort."

"Well, I'll see who is the consort of that one—see! yonder she stands beneath the tree."

"I sees her, sir, if my eyes is a leetle dim, and I advises yer to go slow," answered the old sailor as the boat touched the shore, but being in the dark shadow of the cliff, was evidently unseen by the person who had attracted the curiosity of the middy.

"Jack, await me here; but if you hear shots, row back and ask Captain Dean to send men ashore," said Brete Fairfax, springing from the boat.

"Better let me sail abeam of yer, sir."

"No, I prefer to go alone," and with his sword in hand, and a brace of good pistols in his belt; the daring young middy set out on his voyage of discovery.

Keeping in the shelter of some scrub oaks that grew upon the hillside, he made a *detour* of a quarter of a mile and approached the solitary tree which grew upon the cliff; but, to his chagrin, discovered that the one he sought was not there.

"I'll wait here awhile," he said and sitting down with his back against a mossy bank, he waited patiently; but then, weary with loss of rest for two nights, his eyelids drooped heavily, and he sunk into a deep sleep, from which he awoke with a start, to discover a human form standing in front of him, and a leveled pistol pointing at his heart.

"Well, sir, what do you here?" said a clear voice, and at a glance he recognized the speaker, who stood in the moonlight.

"Captain Kit, the smuggler!" broke from the lips of the midshipman, who now felt that he was in no enviable position.

"Yes, and I ask what do you here?" was the stern reply.

"I saw a form standing beneath yonder tree; it was a woman, and curiosity brought me here, to discover who and what she was," he answered, determined to put a bold face on the matter.

"It was bold of you, for do you not know that it is said here Montauk smugglers have their haunts?"

"Yes, and I discover that the report is true, for you are here."

"Ha! now I see your face, and catch the tones of your voice, I recognize you as the midshipman from whom I took Ned Darrell and his crew last night."

"I am that midshipman, and I am a second time in your power."

"And were doubtless searching for myself and the pirates, when you came here; beware, young man, for the mercy in the heart of Captain Kit may fail, for I have within call a crew who would be only too glad to take your life."

"And in yonder cutter are four-score gallant fellows who would come at my call," boldly said Brete Fairfax.

"Come, yes, but to find you dead, and the smugglers gone where they could not follow; but I will not quarrel with you, but let you go, if you will do that which I ask."

"And that is?"

"Seek the home of the young girl who was with you in disguise, and who is known as Madge, the maid of Perth: tell her that Ned Darrell means her harm, and that she had best go up to the city to stay, until she receives word from Captain Kit that it is safe for her to return to Amboy; will you do this?"

"But Ned Darrell is not in New York, or its vicinity now, and—"

"You know not where Ned Darrell is, and I ask you to pledge yourself to do this, as, were I to send other messenger she might disregard the warning; and, if she does not heed it within the week she will have cause to wish that she had never been born."

The woman spoke with an earnestness of tone and manner that impressed the young midshipman, that she gave no idle warning; but he asked:

"What interest have you in Madge Ferris, the maid of Perth?"

"It matters not to you what; she is a woman, and in danger, and as such I aid her," said Captain Kit, coldly.

"You have some other motive."

"I admit it."

"If you knew Darrell to be such a villain why did you take him from me last night? Ere this he would have ornamented the yard-arm of the cutter."

"True; but I did not wish him to die, at least by other hands—but this talk is idle; do you pledge yourself to do as I require?"

"If I refuse?"

"You will not."

"But if I do?"

"Then you care less for life than any one else of your age and ambition that I have ever met."

"Ha! you threaten me with death?"

"I tell you, young man, that you stand on dangerous ground, for you have a score of eyes upon you now, as you have invaded the territory of the Montauk smugglers; a word from me, and you would be slain within the minute."

It was evident that the girl was in deadly earnest, and Brete Fairfax felt it; but he asked:

"Has Darrell linked his fate with yours?"

"It matters not what he has done; I saved his life, for I cared not to see him die by your hands; do you, or do you not, accept my offer of your life?"

"I do; I will inform the maid of Perth within twenty-four hours."

"You pledge yourself to this?"

"I swear it."

"Enough; I will trust you, and I need not say to you that I request silence in regard to meeting me here?"

"I will not betray you—at least just now; but I shall yet hunt down both Ned Darrell and yourself," he said, fearlessly.

She laughed softly, and answered:

"You are at liberty to do so; but it is not destined that Darrell shall die by your hand, or that my career shall be checked until—but never mind," and she abruptly stopped in her words as she had once before done, when she seemingly trod on a subject unwittingly.

Brete Fairfax was about to reply, when there came a flash from the cutter's side, and the deep boom of a gun echoed over the waters.

"Ha! it is the signal of danger; yes, there sweeps up the Sound the English sloop-of-war," he cried.

"And what means that scene on the shore? Have my men dared disobey my orders?" cried Captain Kit, angrily, as she saw a dozen forms dart out from that shadow of the hill and rush upon the gig and its two occupants.

Old Jack and his comrade met them with shots from their revolvers, but they were instantly fired upon by their assailants, and fell dead in their boat, ere it could draw off from the shore.

At the same time the cutter was seen to swing round and stand away, for the sloop-of-war had swept around a headland, and was in dangerous proximity.

"Well, sir, you are left ashore, but I give you my protection, and those who have fired upon your men without my orders shall be punished," said Captain Kit, sternly.

At first Brete Fairfax had drawn his sword and pistol, believing that he too was to be attacked, when he saw his two men shot down; but there was something in the manner of Captain Kit that reassured him, and he said:

"True, I am in your power, for the cutter has had to fly from her larger foe: but poor old Jack, his days are ended, and I have led him to his death."

"Come with me, and, as I said, I will punish his murderers."

The middy gave one glance at the flying cutter and pursuing Britisher, and followed his strange captor without a word.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WRECK.

"WRECK ho!"

Along over the waters the Sea Trailer, as the schooner Maid of Perth will now be called, was bounding before a nine-knot breeze, the second day after her daring run out of New York Bay and Sound and the cry from the masthead brought Carl Manners from the cabin.

"She is dead ahead, sir, and lies low in the water, while her masts have been shot off, or carried away in a storm," said Alston Brooks, handing Carl the glass as he came on deck.

"Yes, and flies a small signal of distress; keep on as you are, helmsman, and we will soon know what she is," announced the young captain.

A run of half an hour brought the schooner within hearing distance of the wreck, which was now seen to be the hull of a vessel of some three hundred tons, her bulwarks shattered, her two masts gone, and a desolate object indeed to be afloat upon the wide waters.

"Lay the Trailer to, Alston, and I will board her; call away the gig," said Carl, and in ten minutes more he scrambled over the side of the wreck, followed by half a score of seamen.

A sad scene met his gaze, for the decks were torn with shot and grape, the bulwarks were in splinters, here and there lay a dead body, and her ten guns, four to a broadside and stern and bow chasers, were harmless, for not a soul was visible to man them.

"This is good fortune for us at least, lads, though the crew of the craft seem to be all slain," said Carl, and he rushed toward the cabin.

Descending the companionway he saw that the shot had torn their merciless way through and through, for the furniture was piled up in heaps and shattered, the floor was seamed by the iron hurricane that had swept over the wreck, and a dozen dead lay heaped together.

"Ha! who have we here?" and Carl started back, as a form suddenly tottered from a state-room and confronted him.

It was a young man in the uniform of a British naval lieutenant, with a pale, haggard face, a handkerchief, blood-stained, tied around his head, and standing upon one foot, for the other hung helpless, shattered by a shot.

"My dear sir, you are suffering; let me first give you aid, and then tell me how I find your vessel in this plight," said Carl, kindly, and he aided the officer to a seat.

"The story is soon told, sir," said the lieutenant, faintly; "we were attacked by an armed cruiser we mistook for a Britisher, for it was flying our ensign; but it must have been a pirate, as he took us off our guard, poured in broadside after broadside upon us, and then boarded and cut down our crew, after which he robbed the vessel and left, but not until he had sailed around us firing shot after shot to sink us; had not a sail hove in sight, to which he gave chase, I am certain he would have sunk us."

"And you are the only survivor of the combat?" asked Carl.

"No, for there are several more in that state-room, but too badly wounded to get about; then, in the forward hold, there are some thirty

American prisoners we captured, for this is a British brigantine of war, what is left of it," said the officer, smiling sadly.

"And I command an American privateer, but you and your men, falling as they do into my hands, are not prisoners, for I will land you at Halifax; but when did this occur?"

"Yesterday afternoon before sunset."

"And the vessel, professing to be an American cruiser, did not release the prisoners?"

"No, he did not know they were on board, and all he did was done quickly; I would have gone down and released them, but, as you see, was unable, and your coming alone gives me strength to sit up."

"You shall at once receive aid, and be placed in the surgeon's hands on board my vessel; but first tell me what was the style of vessel that attacked you?"

"A large schooner, rather rakish-looking, and the men wore on their caps the name *Tigers*."

"Ha! and did you see her commander?"

"He gave me this wound on the head with a cutlass, which stunned me; he was a tall, fine-looking young man, but with a face decidedly cruel, and which did not belie him, as I have cause to know; his hair was light, and worn long, and his eye blue, while his lip was shaded by a mustache."

"By Heaven! it was Hugh Trevor, for he commands the *Tigers*, and an appropriate name too, it seems, and your description is perfect of the man I refer to."

"An American officer?" asked the lieutenant.

But Carl, as much as he hated Hugh Trevor, the man whom he had vowed to hunt down, would not compromise the American service by saying that he belonged to it, and answered, evasively:

"He is one whom I now seek."

"Ha! he is a pirate then; I did not believe an American officer would act as he did."

"Come in," said Carl, desirous to prevent further questioning, "and you and your men shall be cared for; lads, bear a hand and aid this gentleman to the boat, and bring his comrades, too."

"And you are an American naval officer, sir?" asked the Englishman, gazing with admiration upon the handsome and youthful face.

"I command the schooner, sir."

"Indeed; the United States has young commanders; but they are plucky ones, as I have found out," answered the Englishman.

Obedying the orders of their young captain, the men soon had the wounded officer and his four comrades, a midshipman and three seamen, on board the schooner in comfortable quarters, and under the surgeon's care, while Carl went into the hold to release the thirty prisoners, who had been captured from various merchant vessels.

They were all pale, but had not been badly treated by their captors, yet were delighted at their release, and told how they had felt rather glad of their imprisonment, when they heard the shot tearing through above their heads, but bemoaned their fate when they believed the vessel had been captured and they were left to sink in her.

"Well, my lads, I will give you service in the schooner, which is an American privateer, and promise you plenty of prize money and good treatment; what do you say, will you serve with me?"

There was something in the fearless face and frank manner of Carl Manners that at once won their respect and admiration and they answered with a cheer.

"That's right; now go on board the schooner and get food and a better rig, while my men remove these guns, for I would rather have this old wreck and its contents, than a treasure-ship from the Indies," and Carl Manners gave his orders promptly, and taking the hulk in tow, the *Sea Trailer* was soon heading for the nearest land, in search of quiet water, where the transfer of guns and ammunition could be made from one deck to another.

By nightfall she ran into a cave of the island known as No Man's Land, and the wreck having been lashed alongside of the schooner, the crew, including the released prisoners, set to work with such a good will, that the following afternoon Carl Manners stood upon the armed deck of as stanch and fleet a cruiser as he could desire, and one which, with its crew of ninety men, would prove a dangerous foe to meet in combat, and which caused its young captain to say threateningly:

"Now, let Hugh Trevor cross my path."

CHAPTER X.

THE SEA TRAILER SIGHTS THE TIGRESS.

TEN days after the *Sea Trailer* sailed from No Man's Land, after scuttling the wreck of the British brigantine, she ran into Halifax Harbor with a white flag at the fore, and the Stars and Stripes at the peak.

When brought to by a shot from the fort across her bows, she signaled for a boat from the shore to come alongside, and a launch filled with armed soldiers ran out to the American craft, and an officer boarded.

He was met at the gangway by Carl Manners, who said:

"I have run in to deliver into your care two British officers and three seamen, who were seriously wounded, and whom I took from a wreck."

"This is the American privateer *Sea Trailer*, and if there are any English cruisers of like tonnage in port, you can tell them that when I haul down yonder white flag I am ready for action."

"You are a bold youth for one so young; but I guess you will get accommodated, as you are looking for enemies," was the remark of the British artillery captain, and his wounded countrymen being brought on deck he took them into his boat, the naval lieutenant thanking Carl warmly for his kindness to himself and comrades.

As the launch rowed away, the *Sea Trailer* turned seaward, and by sunset was lying to in the offing hoping to capture some merchant craft bound into Halifax, or that there might be a small cruiser in the harbor that would accept his challenge to run out and meet him.

Toward midnight the lookout reported a sail

in sight, and it was soon discovered to be a schooner a trifle larger than the privateer, and carrying, as Carl saw by his glass, twelve guns.

It was bright moonlight, and after a close examination of the coming vessel, Alston Brooks said thoughtfully:

"Captain Manners, yonder craft is the Tigress."

"What? Hugh Trevor's vessel?" asked Carl with delight.

"The same, sir."

"Impossible, for he would not be coming out of an English port."

"It's the Tigress, wherever she comes from, I am certain."

"Then she has been lying in some sheltered cove, Alston, waiting for a merchant craft, and seeing us has stood down to discover what we are."

"No, she came right down the harbor from Halifax, for I saw her myself, when she was in range of the forts."

"And they did not fire upon her; there is something strange in this, Mr. Brooks."

"There always is, in the action of Hugh Trevor; why, when you had that affair with his brother Talbot, because he said you were a traitor to America, there were many who said that he was at heart no patriot; but she comes on well, so what is to be done?"

"I'll signal him who I am and ask an interview, when I shall challenge him to meet me in a duel."

"And if he refuses?"

"I shall fight his vessel, capture him, and hang him to the yard-arm, as I have told you, releasing his schooner to sail under the command of his first officer."

"I wish this meeting could be avoided, Carl," said Alston Brooks, kindly.

"It cannot," almost fiercely said Carl Manners; "no, a short while ago and I had a pleasant home, and was happy in the love of my mother and sister Clarette."

"Talbot Trevor, hating me on account of the ill will that existed between my father and his, accused me publicly of being a traitor and I resented it; he sought my life, and I knocked him down, the blow killing him."

"You know the result, Alston; his father's influence sent me to prison, and it broke my poor mother's heart and she died; my home is broken up, my sister Clarette dwelling with Agnes Benedict at the Keel and Anchor Inn, and myself a fugitive from justice with the brand of convict upon me."

"I know that Hugh Trevor has sworn to take my life, to revenge Talbot's and I have made a vow to kill him; beat to quarters please, Mr. Brooks, and then signal the Tigress, as you believe yonder craft to be, and certainly she answers the rig of the vessel fitted out as a privateer for Talbot."

"She is the Tigress," answered Alston Brooks, and he gave the orders for the men to go to quarters, and the Sea Trailer getting under weigh, and with only easy working sails set, stood off and on awaiting the approaching vessel, not more than a mile away.

With lanterns Carl then signaled that he was

an American privateer, and asked the nature of the coming schooner.

"American privateer Tigress, Captain Hugh Trevor," came back the answer.

"You were right, Alston; but why has he come directly out of the port of Halifax, I wonder?" and Carl signaled for the schooner to run down within hailing distance.

A few minutes more and the two schooners were not a cable-length apart, but both crews were at their guns, and all ready for action, for they knew not whether to expect a trap or not.

"Ho the Tigress!" shouted Carl, springing into the ratlines.

"Ahoy the privateer," came back the reply.

"Is Captain Hugh Trevor on board?"

"Ay, ay; who calls me?" was the answer in the voice of the captain himself.

"One who desires to see you personally; meet me alone in your gig, half-way between our vessels."

"This is a strange request; from whom does it come?" asked Hugh Trevor, with suspicion.

"It comes from one who will meet you if it takes years; I will go alone, unarmed, in my gig; you do the same, for I mean no treachery."

"Ay, ay, I will meet you," was the answer, and the next moment followed the orders on both schooners to lay to, and lower away the gig *without a crew*.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CHALLENGE.

WHEN both schooners came to, the movements of each were watched with anxious eyes from the two vessels, and Alston Brooks said to Carl Manners as he was about to go over the side into the gig:

"Better go armed, sir."

"No, I asked him to go unarmed, and I shall do the same."

The lieutenant knew it was useless to urge, and going into the cabin, as Carl cast off from the Sea Trailer, he soon returned with a long rifle, and muttered:

"Guess, if Hugh Trevor means treachery I can shoot as quick as he can."

Hardly had the gig gotten twice its length from the Sea Trailer when around the stern of the Tigress came its gig, Hugh Trevor rowing with quick, strong stroke.

The vessels were now about two hundred yards apart, and lay motionless upon the waters, while over the gently rippled waters the two gigs were pulling toward each other, to meet at a given point.

The moon shone in an unclouded sky, and the bulwarks of each vessel showed a long line of eager faces glancing over them, and wondering at the strange meeting of the commanders.

Reaching a point half-way between the vessels first, Carl Manners swung his boat round, with its bow toward the Sea Trailer, and rested upon his oars.

A moment after Hugh Trevor did likewise, the gigs being about a couple of lengths apart.

Then the eyes of Hugh Trevor fell upon the face and form of the one he had come to meet,

and an exclamation of surprise broke from his lips, while he dropped his right hand into his bosom as though to draw a concealed weapon.

"By the Cross! you are that convict and murderer, Carl Manners," he said, insultingly.

"I am Carl Manners, an escaped convict, Hugh Trevor; but I am no murderer," was the calm reply.

"In the devil's name what do you here?"

"I was looking for you, and I am glad I have found you, as you must be equally happy in seeing me, for we have sworn an oath that must be kept."

"And mine shall be; now tell me how I find you on yonder vessel, when I believed you in prison, for the murder of my poor brother?"

"I escaped, as I told you, and I command yonder schooner, which is the Maid of Perth, that you so longed to have."

"Ha! I could have sworn it; by Heaven, you are a pirate, and I shall capture you."

"Call me what you please, Hugh Trevor, it does not make me so; but your coming out of Halifax harbor looks suspicious to say the least."

"I ran in for an exchange of prisoners," hesitatingly replied Trevor.

"Our Government makes exchanges; but I am not here to question you, but to demand that you sail with me to a lonely spot, No Man's Land, and there meet me in a fair duel."

"You are a fool, Carl Manners, to think I would accept a challenge from a convict."

"You refuse, then?"

"Certainly; if you were not, as you profess, sailing under the American flag, I would engage and sink you; by the Cross! I have half a mind to do so anyhow, for I would like the Maid of Perth, as I well know what she is."

"Yes, you would wish to serve me as you did a British brigantine two weeks ago; but my schooner is now called the Sea Trailer, Hugh Trevor, and I am on your trail, so if you refuse to meet me in honorable conflict face to face, go on board your vessel and fight it out."

"By Heaven! you are as I thought, a pirate, to say you will fire upon an American privateer, and it is my duty to take you prisoner and hang you to the yard of my schooner—one movement and you die, sir!"

As he spoke he leveled a pistol full at Carl Manners, who certainly did not expect such treatment on his part, and was wholly at his mercy; but, hardly had the arm been stretched forth with the leveled weapon, when there came a flash, and sharp report from the Sea Trailer, and, with a bitter curse, Hugh Trevor dropped the firearm into the sea, and his hand fell helpless to his side.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BRITISHER.

WITH the shot from the Sea Trailer all was excitement on both vessels, and each crew awaited an order from their captains what to do, and a word would have precipitated a conflict.

At the shot two heads were raised from the bottom of the gig in which Hugh Trevor stood, but were quickly ducked down again; yet Carl Manners saw them, and said scornfully:

"You, a double-dyed traitor, Hugh Trevor, refuse to meet me in a fair duel, because I am a convict! Bah!—your pistol and your two seamen concealed in the bottom of your boat prove how little honor you have."

"Did you think I was a fool to meet you unarmed and alone, not knowing into what trap I was to be led? And the spy you set to watch my action, has sent a bullet through my arm."

"I regret the shot, and know not who fired it; but certainly you deserved it for your treachery. Now, what is your intention?"

"To go on board my schooner and either capture or sink your craft."

"So be it, and remember, Hugh Trevor, it is war to the death between us," said Carl Manners, grimly.

"It shall be, sir."

"You had best consider; a duel between us will save many a brave man's life, whom we have no right to draw into our quarrel, and should we both be slain, our vessels can still be of service to our Government."

"I will not honor you, sir, by a personal meeting."

"So be it, Hugh Trevor," and Carl Manners dropped his oars into the water, and his foe, knowing further disguise of his treachery was useless, and suffering from his wounded arm, called to the two seamen, lying prostrate in his gig, to arise and row back, while he shouted:

"Ho, the Tigress! All ready for action!"

But hardly had the words left his lips, when from the Sea Trailer came the startling cry:

"Sail ho!"

It was no use for the captains to ask where, for there suddenly swept into view from behind a point of headland, a large vessel-of-war, and that she was an Englishman there could be no doubt.

"Another time, Carl Manners, we shall meet," called out Hugh Trevor, for already was the Englishman luffing up for a broadside, and it would be no easy matter to escape.

But Alston Brooks was equal to the emergency; the schooner was moving through the water when the gig struck her side, and sail was being rapidly spread when Carl sprung upon deck.

"Up with this gig! lively, lads, or we'll get knocked out of the water! There comes her iron!" cried Carl, and over them flew the hurtling iron with fierce shrieks.

But not a shot touched the Sea Trailer, and seemingly hesitating upon which schooner to bestow her direct attentions, both the privateers were flying away before another broadside came, one to the southward, the other to the northward, and Carl Manners had his stern pivot-gun playing sad havoc with the rigging of the Englishman, while the Tigress, in her flight, fired no shot at her huge enemy.

"Yes, another time we shall meet, Hugh Trevor, and now that I know you refuse a personal conflict with me, I shall know how to act," muttered Carl, as he gazed after his enemy, which the coming of the British vessel had separated him from just as there was a prospect of his keeping his vow to have revenge upon Hugh Trevor.

As the Britisher had come on a course that

caused each schooner to fly in an opposite direction from the other, it was evident that they would hardly be able to come together again that night; but when the English craft, after sending another broadside at the Sea Trailer, stood on after the Tigress, to which she was a trifle nearer, Carl Manners determined to keep in sight, and should Hugh Trevor escape his large enemy, to hang in his wake until another opportunity offered to give him battle, and he ordered the forward pivot-gun to continue to play upon the cruiser, and told his helmsman to follow slowly in her wake.

"It is strange that Trevor does not fire from his stern guns," said Alston Brooks.

"It is strange, and I cannot account for it, and I do not wish to believe that at heart Hugh Trevor is an Englishman, but his coming out of Halifax looks strangely suspicious; but, Alston, who fired that shot that wounded Trevor?"

"Ah! it hit him, then? I saw the pistol drop from his hand, but thought it was with fright."

"And you fired, then?"

"Yes, captain; I saw you were too honorable to go armed, so I just brought on deck my old deer rifle, and I am glad I did."

"And so am I; for Trevor held me at a vantage, and had he carried me on board the schooner, there was but one way to release me."

"And that way I should have tried, and I know we could have retaken you, if he has more guns and men—that is if—"

"If what, Alston?"

"If he did not put you at once to death, which I believe he would have done; but in that case, up to yonder yard-arm he would have gone, by Heaven!"

"I believe you, Alston—ha! the Englishman gains on the Tigress, and we must not let him take her, so crowd on more sail, and we'll run closer and worry the bull-dog, for we dare not do more," and, as Alston Brooks set more sail on the Sea Trailer, Carl Manners went forward and himself took charge of the pivot twenty-four mounted upon the bows, saying quickly:

"Put in a good charge, gunner, and I'll see if I cannot cut away some of that Britisher's canvas."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MUTINY.

WHEN Captain Kit, the girl smuggler, told Brete Fairfax to accompany her to the shore, he silently followed, and in a few moments they stood beneath the shadow of the cliff, where a group of men, some dozen in number, were gathered in earnest conversation.

The gig had been drawn out upon the beach and the dead bodies of Sailor Jack and his messmate were lying upon the sands, having been quickly rifled of their few valuables.

"Who has dared attack these men without my orders?" and Captain Kit confronted the crowd, her eyes flashing, and her face determined.

"We seen 'em in a boat, called to 'em to come ashore, and as they didn't we kilt 'em," said a burly fellow in an insolent tone.

"Ah! you are one of Darrell's men; I thought my men would not disobey me; but my orders included you too, and as you have disregarded my command, I shall severely punish you."

"You! you, a gal, punish us; well, I guess not, my beauty," was the insolent rejoinder, but as quick as a flash of light, Captain Kit sprung forward and dealt him a blow fairly in the face, that caused him to measure his length upon the ground.

With a cry like an enraged beast he arose, knife in hand and rushed upon her, shouting:

"Come, lads, we'll end Captain Kit and take her craft and spoils."

The proposition seemed to meet with general favor, and they sprung forward toward the maiden; but with a thrusting forward of her hand the burly ruffian fell dead, a bullet in his brain.

Yet this maddened, rather than checked his followers, and they rushed *en masse* upon her, she stepping quickly backward, her sword drawn to resist them.

But suddenly a form dashed before her, and once, twice, there came a bright flash and report, and two men went down, while with a sweep of a keen blade another fell dead in his tracks.

"Back, you hounds! do you press me?"

It was Brete Fairfax who had bounded suddenly to the rescue, and just in time, for the mutineers certainly would have killed Captain Kit, though one or more might have bitten the dust before she was conquered.

They shrunk back at the bold youth's onslaught, and one of them said:

"What has you got to do with it?"

"You have seen what I have to do; protect this maiden, and I warn you off, mutinous hounds that you are," answered the midshipman fearlessly, while Captain Kit placed herself at his side and said scornfully:

"They are eight against two, and one of those two a woman, and yet they dare not attack us."

In the shadow of the cliff stood Captain Kit and the midshipman, and in the bright moonlight were gathered the mutineers, their four dead comrades at their feet.

They had no pistols, but they clutched their knives in their hands, and seemed anxious for a leader to lead them against the two who so fearlessly confronted them.

But as they thus hesitated, there came the sound of running feet, and a score of men darted out of the ravine, and appeared upon the scene.

"It is Clyde and my men; bravo! lads, you are needed!" cried Captain Kit, as they caught sight of the crowd, and halted near, while Darrell's band fell back sullenly.

"What is it, Captain Kit?" asked a tall, fearless-faced seaman, advancing from among his men.

"Ah! Darrell's hounds disobeyed my orders, fired upon those two man-of-war's men there, and then attacked me because I said they should be punished; had it not been for this gallant young officer, they would have killed me too."

"Indeed! why it is the young gentleman who had them prisoners in boats; but what is your

will, Captain Kit?" said the tall seaman, whom the maiden had called Clyde.

"Put these men in irons, and leave them until they are repentant; if any others of Darrell's band resist, or show ill-humor, iron them too," was the stern order.

"It shall be done; come, lads, let us take these fellows back and teach them a lesson," and Clyde and his men had the mutineers bound securely in a few moments and led away.

"Now, sir, let me thank you for my life," and Captain Kit turned and offered her hand to Brete Fairfax, who grasped it with sailor-like frankness, and replied:

"Ah! I would have helped any one who was in danger; but I feel sad for the fate of poor old Jack and Dunnin here, and will bury them!"

"No, I will send and have that done; now come with me, and I trust to your honor not to betray what you may discover, for I intend taking you to my retreat, and then running you down to New York in my vessel."

Brete Fairfax paused; he was evidently deeply meditating, and Captain Kit turned and patiently awaited his reply.

At last he said:

"No, place no such confidence in me, for my duty will compel me to hunt you down as an outlaw."

"Here is my gig, let me take it and go to the city, and I warn you that I shall soon be upon the hunt for you."

"You are a fearless youth, to thus beard me within call of my men; but you are free to go, yet not in your gig, as you could not reach New York within forty-eight hours rowing; wait here, and I will send you a fishing-smack—a fishing-smack, remember, and a crew to run you down to the city, and go with all speed, for I tell you that Darrell is now there, and any moment may plot harm against Madge, the maid of Perth."

"Ha! he is in the city then? Well, I will go at once, for what he does that is evil, he does quickly."

"Then farewell; the smack will be here within the hour, so row out to it in your gig, which you had better take with you; farewell, and remember, Captain Kit is your friend at heart, though your duty makes you her foe."

She turned quickly away and Brete Fairfax was left alone; no, not alone, for almost at his feet lay the bodies of his two faithful seamen, and ten feet away were the stark forms of the mutineers.

Slowly he paced to and fro, deeply thinking of what had happened, and gazing far over the Sound at each turn, in a vain endeavor to catch sight of the Sea Wizard and the large vessel that had given her chase.

At length around a point of rocks, putting out into the little cove, came a small craft, a *chebacca* boat, such as was used by fishermen half a century ago on the New England coast.

Running close in, a sturdy voice hailed:

"Ahoy, sir! we has orders from Captain Kit to run you down to the city."

"Ay, ay, I will be with you in a minute; but I don't like to leave my messmates unburied."

"The captain has sent a party by the shore to bury 'em, sir."

"All right," and springing into the gig, the midshipman was soon alongside the little vessel, his boat drawn on deck, and gliding swiftly over the waters of the Sound for New York.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ALLY.

WHEN Midshipman Brete Fairfax arrived at a dock in New York, shortly after night, having made a very rapid run in the *chebacca* boat, he said, addressing the half-dozen men who had come as the crew, and whom no one would have suspected of being smugglers under Captain Kit:

"Lads, I have found you such jolly good tars, I wish I could keep you for a service I have on hand, and which, by the way, I am sent on by your fair captain."

"We are willing, sir; the captain gave us sealed orders, as it was, telling us to come back when you told us you had no use for us," said the skipper.

"Then that settles it; I'll take you with me, and pay you well for your service; now leave one of your number here, and the remainder of you scatter through the town to see if you cannot find the whereabouts of Ned Darrell, for I seek him."

"A fellow feeling, sir, should make us protect Darrell; but he has, as we know, through one of his men, already plotted to take Captain Kit's sloop from her, if he cannot get a craft to suit him here, and will go cruising on his own account, so we don't care if he does get caught."

"The traitor; he is treacherous even to Captain Kit, who saved him from hanging, for ere this he would have hanged, had she not rescued him. Now lads, see if you can find him, and meet me here in a couple of hours; here's a little metal for you," and he gave to each one a few pieces of silver, and walked away from the dock.

As he did so, a slight form arose from a pile of lumber, and keeping out of sight of the crew, still on the *chebacca* boat, followed the midshipman, and touched him lightly on the arm.

Turning quickly, Brete Halifax beheld a lad of slight, graceful form attired in a sailor suit, and wearing a tarpaulin that sat jauntily upon his head.

His face was dark, but as beautiful as a girl's in every feature, and short, auburn curls clustered around his neck.

"Well, my lad, how can I serve you?" and the midshipman gazed upon the lad with a look of unfeigned admiration, for the swinging street lamp threw its lightfull in the boyish face.

"I saw your boat land, sir, and hid behind the lumber," he said in an embarrassed way.

"Ah! eavesdropping eh?"

"I heard you speak of Edward Darrell, sir, and I can tell you where he has gone, for I went to the dock to get a boat to follow him."

"Ha! you know of Darrell, the pirate?"

"I believe he is called a pirate, sir; yes, sir, I know *where* he went and *why* he went there."

"This is news indeed; and who are you, my young lad, that knows of the movements of this Darrell?" and the lad's eyes dropped beneath the earnest gaze of the midshipman.

"I am one, sir, that Edward Darrell has

wronged most bitterly; one who hates him in his inmost heart."

"Ah! you are then a good ally, and I will be glad to have you join me in my search for him."

"I know where he has gone, for, an hour before sunset he set sail from this dock, in a sloop yacht."

"Gone, and whither?"

"To Amboy!"

"By Heaven! this is indeed news; already has he gone on his devilish expedition, so I must hasten; do you know if he had any companions with him, my lad?"

"Yes, sir; he had eight men with him, and all well armed, and he was disguised; I was hidden yonder in the lumber when they left, but was then unable to—"

He paused abruptly, and the middy said:

"Well, you can go with me; I have six men, and we two will make eight; but had he twice the number he has, I would attack him."

"No, no, you must not kill him, sir," cried the lad, earnestly.

"But he deserves death, and but just now you said you hated him."

"So I do, sir; too much to see him die like an honorable man; let him be captured and—hanged."

There was intense feeling in the boy's voice as he said this, and Brete Fairfax answered readily:

"You are right; he must not die like a brave man, but be strung up to the yard-arm like the pirate that he is; now come, let us be off, for I see that my men are ready to go up into the town, and we must stop them, for we have no time to lose, for Darrell has two hours the start of us."

Returning to the crew of the chebacca boat, the midshipman told them what he had just learned regarding Darrell, and five minutes after the swift little craft was speeding down the harbor, and heading for Amboy, whither the boy ally had said the pirates had gone, and where was the home of Madge Ferris, the fair maid of Perth.

CHAPTER XV.

A DOUBLE DISAPPOINTMENT.

WITH the seven-knot breeze that was blowing a run of three hours brought the chebacca boat to the green shore of Amboy, where dwelt Abram Ferris, the old sea captain, and his beautiful daughter.

The house was dark, but a loud rap caused a head to poke out of the window over the door, and the captain himself asked:

"What's up now?"

"It is I, Captain Ferris: Midshipman Fairfax of the Sea Wizard."

"Ah! more trouble for me, I suppose, on account of the scrape that accursed Darrell led me into," grumbled the old man, having reference to his having been inveigled by Darrell into loading his schooner, Maid of Perth, to run out with supplies to sell to the British fleet off Sandy Hook.

"It is of Darrell I would ask you, captain; have you seen him?" asked the middy.

"Thank God, no."

"And he has not been here to-night?"

"No; I heard he had run to sea as a pirate, and I hope they'll catch and hang him."

"Then you have had no visitors to-night?"

"Yes, old Colonel Benedict, of the Keel and Anchor Inn, sent his boatman down after Madge, a while ago."

An exclamation of surprise and alarm broke from the lips of the group beneath the window, and Brete Fairfax said quickly:

"Did he come in a sloop yacht?"

"Yes; why do you ask?"

"Dress yourself quickly and come down here, Captain Ferris," called out the middy, in a tone that caused the old man to ask anxiously:

"In Heaven's name, what is it, Mr. Fairfax?"

"I fear that your daughter is in vile hands, sir."

"I tell you that the colonel sent Bent, the boatman, after her, to see Agnes Benedict, who was ill."

"Come down, I say, and bring your arms; that was a ruse to get Miss Madge into his power, for Ned Darrell has kidnapped her."

A groan answered the middy's words; but they heard the old man bustling rapidly about overhead, and within five minutes he opened the door, and was dressed and armed.

"Now, sir, you say that Ned Darrell has kidnapped my child?"

"It looks so, captain. He left New York before sunset in a sloop yacht and with eight men, and their destination was Amboy; and I have reason to know that he intends to harm to your daughter," and in a few words the midshipman told of the capture of the Maid of Perth by Darrell, the recapture by Carl Manners, and the rescue of the men by Captain Kit; then he added:

"Darrell left some of his men up at Montauk, and with the balance came on to New York to capture another vessel, if possible, and determined to carry Miss Madge to sea with him."

"My poor, poor child!" groaned the stricken father.

"Let us act, not bewail, captain; we will run at once for the Keel and Anchor Inn, and if our fears are verified, we will there see what is to be done, for the Sea Wizard, which went up the Sound, will doubtless be back to-night; at any rate it is certain that Darrell will not put to sea until he receives a suitable vessel!"

"Unless he carries men enough to take the sloop from Captain Kit, sir, and with her he was to run to Boston and cut out a better vessel," said the skipper of the chebacca boat.

"Then we have no time to lose; come," and five minutes after the little craft was flying through Staten Island Sound, on her way to New York Harbor.

Crowding all sail, she glided along at a speed that soon cleared the Sound, and rounding the Island. Brete put his helm a-starboard, and ran down the harbor, until the Keel and Anchor Inn loomed up on the shore before them.

Running close in he dropped anchor, and landing the gig, sprung into it with Captain Ferris and the lad, who begged to accompany them.

"Skipper, have the anchor up and sail set,

when I hail you from the shore, for we may have to run back to the city," said Brete, and seizing the oars himself he sent the gig rapidly landward.

The old inn seemed deserted, and was as quiet as the grave, but a dim light was visible in the top room, and a loud knock brought from the old colonel within, a graff:

"Who's there?"

"Midshipman Fairfax, of the Sea Wizard, colonel."

"A late hour to seek refreshments, young gentleman, even from the hospitable Keel and Anchor."

"I seek no refreshments, but information, Colonel Benedict, and Captain Abram Ferris is with me," said the middy somewhat hotly.

The next instant the landlord opened the door, and Captain Ferris asked eagerly:

"Colonel, is my child, Madge, here?"

"No, Ferris, not that I know of, though she may have come without my knowing it, and be up-stairs with Agnes and Clarette Manners."

"Oh, God! have mercy! for God's sake, see if she is there," groaned the unhappy father.

"I feel confident that she is not, Captain Ferris; Colonel Benedict, your boatman, Bent, came to the captain's some hours ago and said you had sent for Miss Madge, as your daughter Agnes was ill."

"My boatman, Mr. Fairfax?"

"Yes, sir; so he said."

"It was Bent, for I saw him," put in Captain Ferris.

"The rascal! I discharged him two days ago for his deviltry, and he has dared to—"

"Colonel, he has a master, and that is Ned Darrell, the pirate."

"By Heaven! I would have sworn it; my poor Ferris, I feel deeply for you, and I will join you on the hunt for Madge."

"No, colonel, we must be off at once; my regards, please, to your daughters and Miss Manners; come, captain, we may yet head him off at the city, for I feel confident he would not put to sea without a suitable boat," and Brete drew Captain Ferris away, while turning, he called back:

"Colonel, if you see Captain Dean, please say to him that I am on the trail of Darrell," and raising his voice he called out:

"Ho! the chebacca boat!"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Up with your anchor and set sail."

By the time that the gig was drawn on the deck of the little craft, it was moving through the water, and heading toward New York, with the eyes of the old landlord and Agnes Benedict and Clarette Manners fixed upon her white sails, for the knock at the door had aroused the maidens from their slumbers, and they had heard all that had been said.

"There goes a dashing youth, girls, and if anybody can run Ned Darrell to cover he'll do it," said the old colonel, as he closed his door and once more sought rest.

CHAPTER XVI.

A PRISONER.

HELD steadily on her course the chebacca boat ran into a dock in East River, and an hour

and a half after leaving Staten Island, and a short while before daybreak.

On the way up anxious eyes had been cast upon every side for a sight of the yacht of Ned Darrell, but nowhere had it been seen; but, as Brete Fairfax sprung upon the pier, he suddenly saw the sails, of a vessel anchored in the stream above, glimmer in the moonlight, and watching her an instant he beheld her glide silently away up toward Hell Gate.

"Somehow, I feel that yonder vessel bears Ned Darrell on its decks," he said quickly, turning to the lad who stood by his side.

"I know the vessel, sir; I saw her lying in the dock this afternoon, and she is a store-ship that was to sail for Boston."

"Ha! then it does look suspicious, for she would not start at this hour, and go through the Sound, where there would be no chance to run from the blockading fleet; yes, I remember a nimble-heeled craft was taken by the Government, to run a full equipment to Boston for a privateer just built there; come, we'll go to the dock, and see what we can learn."

The midshipman and his youthful ally, in the hunt for Darrell, and who said his name was Skip, started at a rapid pace for the dock, and had hardly arrived when a seaman dashed up in breathless haste, and seeing them, cried:

"Has she left you too, messmates?"

"Yes, we were too late; but I don't remember seeing you on the schooner," said Brete Fairfax.

"Nor I you, sir; but I was shipped all the same for the cruise, and it's not a seaman-like act for Captain Darrell to sail ahead o' time, and leave us ashore."

Both the middy and the lad started at the name of Darrell, but the former said quietly:

"There's a little craft lying against that dock down the stream, and I've half a mind to take it and overhaul the schooner, for we can run over shallow water and head her off; what say you, messmates?"

"I'm willing, for I'm out of money, and don't like being left ashore."

"And I'm with you," echoed the youth.

"Then you run ahead, my lad, and see that the coast is clear, and we'll follow you; if you see any men on board the craft, let us know, for we'll have to give it up," said Brete Fairfax in a significant tone, that the lad understood, and he darted away on ahead, while the middy and the disappointed seaman followed.

"I see no one on board," said the lad, joining them as they drew near, and cautiously they approached, and sprung nimbly down upon the deck of the chebacca boat.

But, as the feet of the stranger touched, he was seized by the throat and a pistol-muzzle was pressed against his head, while the midshipman said in a low, stern tone:

"You are my prisoner, sir."

"I say, messmate, what does this mean?" growled the startled man.

"It means that I will kill you as I would a dog, if you do not tell me the truth; if you answer as I will, and will join us, I will spare your life; come lads, take him into the cabin."

Out of the cabin came the half-dozen smugglers, whom a warning from Skip had sent

there, and down into the little cuddy was the prisoner dragged, and a light turned full into his face.

"Lord! is you going to kill me, messmates?" he cried.

"That depends upon yourself; now tell me, what vessel was that which sailed a quarter of an hour ago?" asked Brete Fairfax.

"The Dolphin."

"What was she?"

"A schooner," was the sullen reply.

"Skip, put your knife against this fellow's ribs, and if he cannot answer properly, let him feel its point."

"Ay, ay, sir," promptly answered the lad, and as promptly obeying.

"Now, sir, what was that schooner?"

"A Government store-ship."

"Ah! who commanded her?"

"When?"

"Just now, when she got under way?"

"One who don't bear a commission."

"So I believed; his name is Ned Darrell."

"You are on the right track, messmate," doggedly answered the man.

"Now tell me how he got possession of her?"

"What am I to get for it?"

"Death, if you do not!" was the middy's response.

"I'll make more by telling, I guess, so I'll tell all you want to know; but I think I deserve something more than threats."

"Serve me faithfully and you shall have a pardon, and—"

"A pardon for what?"

"Piracy."

The man winced, and Brete Fairfax continued:

"I will get you a berth on board the Sea Wizard, and you can have a share in the reward offered for Darrell, the pirate."

"Well, sir," began the seaman, in a tone of respect he had not before shown, "the schooner's crew was enlisted by the boatswain of the admiral's flagship, and who was a friend of Captain Darrell's and is to be a luff on board if they get to sea."

"And he enlisted Darrell's own men?"

"He did for a fact, sir."

"And you are one?"

The man hesitated; but then boldly said:

"Yes, sir, I have been with him in a number of lively expeditions."

"In his first effort to run the Maid of Perth out to the British fleet with supplies?"

"Yes, sir."

"In his attack on the Sea Wizard?"

"Yes, sir."

"In his cutting out the Maid of Perth several nights ago?"

"No, sir, I was not with him then, but, with a score more men, was to run around by Staten Island Sound and the Raritan, and join him off Long Branch."

"To-night were you with him on his run down to Amboy?"

"You have got him close-hauled, sir, for you know all, it seems; yes, sir, I went down to Amboy with him."

The middy glanced at Captain Ferris, who was seated back in the shadow, and who now leaned eagerly forward.

"And you saw him kidnap Miss Ferris?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where is she now?"

All hung breathlessly upon the answer, Skip showing as much excitement as did the father of the stolen girl.

The man was silent, and the middy repeated:

"Where is she now?"

"On board the schooner, sir."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CHASE.

THE announcement made by the prisoner brought a smothered groan from Captain Ferris, and an exclamation of regret from even the smuggler crew, for they pitied the fate that would befall the fair maid of Perth, in the hands of the unmerciful Darrell.

"And he carried Miss Ferris with him on the schooner?" asked the midshipman.

"He certainly did; but I guess the crew won't let him harm her, for there's some men among 'em, even if they is cut-throats by trade," was the rather cheering response of the prisoner, and it raised him in the opinion of Brete Fairfax.

"Now, my man, tell me about the captain of the store-ship?"

"Well, sir, Captain Darrell, it seems, met with hard luck in his attempt to cut out the Maid of Perth, and he came back to him, and meeting his friend, the boatswain of the flagship, it was planned to get possession of the schooner he has just sailed in; a crew was shipped by the boatswain, and all Captain Darrell had to do was to go on board after he returned from Amboy with the girl.

"He sent me up to his old quarters to do an errand for him, and left before I got back, as you know."

"And what will he do with the officer in charge of the schooner?"

"Drop him up the Sound somewhere, after he has found the forts which the boatswain, who knows the man-of-war signals, will run him by."

"And his purpose then?"

"To arm the schooner with the guns in her hold, ship the balance of his men at Montauk, and then go to pirating, I guesses, sir."

"Thank you, my man; you have answered well, so I wish you to aid me in this matter and I'll reward you."

"It's hard to go back on an old shipmate, sir."

"True; but it is either Darrell's life or yours; whichever you like the best, yourself or Darrell, you can serve."

"I'm looking out for myself just now, sir," answered the man, with a grim smile.

"Then, captain, we at once go in pursuit; set sail, lads, and we'll show the schooner that the chebacca boat will hang like a bloodhound upon his trail," and nimbly the men sprung to work, and in three minutes more the little craft was heading up East River at a rate that would certainly keep the fugitive schooner in sight.

Through the wild waters of Hell Gate rushed the chebacca boat, held on her course unswervingly by the smuggler helmsman, and passing fort, under the signals of Brete Fairfax, she

lay well over under the pressure of the fresh breeze, and beheld, in the early morning light, the schooner not very far ahead, she also having run the gantlet of the fortress, for the boatswain had signaled her to be the storeship bound for Boston.

With sailors' rough suits drawn over their own clothing Brete Fairfax and Captain Ferris were not recognizable to any curious eyes that might turn a glass upon them from the schooner, and remaining upon deck they searched the shores and water in the hope of catching sight of the Sea Wizard, for did the cutter appear in sight they knew that the fate of the fugitive craft was sealed.

But nowhere was the welcome sail discovered, and about two leagues in advance the schooner held on her way, keeping well over toward the Long Island shore, while the chebacca boat, running down the Connecticut side, pressed on under full sail, not to be dropped astern.

The wind was fair and very slowly the chebacca boat gained on the schooner, for Darrell had only his lower sails set, and seemed not anxious to get to sea before night, when he could more readily run the gantlet of the English blockading fleet.

At length the twilight fell upon the waters, and soon the high cliffs of Montauk came in sight, and the schooner was seen by those on the chebacca boat to head into the cove on the shores of which Brete Fairfax and Captain Kit had had their conflict with Darrell's men.

Without hesitation the midshipman followed, for he had determined to land and boldly attack Darrell, if he refused to give up the Maid of Perth, and he felt assured that he would be aided by Captain Kit, and hoped to make the pirate chief a prisoner while he was on shore away from his vessel.

Keeping close in under the shadow of the land he dropped anchor quietly, and leaving the chebacca boat crewless they all rowed ashore and set off for the spot where it was thought that Darrell would be found, for he had also anchored as though it was his intention to remain some little time.

"If we can only arrive before Captain Kit releases his men from irons, we will have him in our power, for he will hardly carry more than a dozen men ashore with him: and once he is taken the schooner can be easily carried," said Brete Fairfax, and the whole party set off at a rapid walk around the curving shore, Skip the sailor lad seeming more anxious than any to meet the man he said had so wronged him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A BLOW FOR AN ENEMY.

LEAVING Brete Fairfax and his party to move against Ned Darrell, the daring pirate leader, I will return to the Sea Trailer, which was running in closer to the British vessel-of-war, to prevent, if possible, the capture of Hugh Trevor's schooner.

Having determined to sink all personal matters, to serve his country by rescuing the Tigress from her peril, Carl Manners, it will be remembered, ordered more canvas spread, and then went forward to throw a shot from his large bow gun at the Englishman.

Aiming with coolness and precision, he applied the fuse, and a cheer burst from the crew of the Sea Trailer, as they saw the shot plunge upon the enemy's deck.

Another shot quickly followed, and buried itself in the mizzen-mast of the Englishman, about thirty feet above the deck, and which caused the vessel to stagger under the shock.

Finding that he had such a dangerous foe in his wake, the Englishman wore round to give him a broadside, when the weakened mizzen-mast, unable to stand the pressure, snapped short off at the spot where the Sea Trailer's shot was buried, and down upon the deck fell the wreck.

A wild cheer arose from the Sea Trailer, and being content with the damage he had done, Carl Manners called:

"Ready about!"

The graceful vessel wore round, as though on a pivot, but, while in stays, the wounded Englishman sent his broadside, and the iron did not leave the Sea Trailer unmarred by a great deal, for her foretopmast was shot away, a rent in her bulwarks was made, and half a dozen men went down killed and wounded.

"Mr. Brooks, turn that stern gun upon him! Into the rigging, men, and spread canvas, for another such a broadside may cripple us," cried Carl Manners, and as nimble as cats the crew sprung to obey, while the large stern gun belched forth shot after shot, nearly every discharge doing good service in behalf of the escaping schooner.

Though crippled, by the loss of half of her mizzenmast, and hit hard by some of the shots from the Sea Trailer, the Englishman sent his broadsides savagely after the schooner, some of them adding to the death list, and others injuring the rigging.

But Carl was content, for he felt that he had saved the Tigress from capture, and he felt no further anxiety for his own vessel as he was rapidly drawing out of range; but to feel that he was unable to keep his enemy, Hugh Trevor, in sight, or pursue him, was a sad grievance, for he feared that he would avoid him, seeing that his injuries were such that he could not follow as he wished.

As soon as he had dropped the Englishman from sight, Carl Manners ordered the schooner brought to, and men were put to work on the rigging, setting a new topmast, patching the sails, and repairing damages generally.

Thus several hours passed away, and the Sea Trailer was as good as before her exchange of shots with the Englishman, excepting the five poor fellows that had been sent to a watery grave, and the half-dozen below decks groaning with their wounds.

"Now, Alston, we will go again on the trail of the Tigress; let a double watch be set, and should we sight her, remember she has got to fight it out, as Hugh Trevor declines to meet me personally."

"Ay, ay, captain; it won't do much harm to sink him, I guess, for I cannot get over the idea that there is something wrong about his coming out of Halifax Harbor."

"It looks suspicious, Alston, but I will not judge him a traitor until I have better proof,

for we, too, were in the English port," said Carl Manners.

"We had business there; but we'll wait and see," and Alston Brooks did as he was directed, set double watches, and kept the deck himself, for he wished to have the affair with Hugh Trevor ended, as he knew that his young captain would then be anxious to win a name for himself that would cause the world to forget that he once bore the name of convict.

But search as they did, and cruise the coast of Nova Scotia from one end to the other, the Tigress was not sighted, and Carl gave orders to head down the shores of the United States.

Hardly had he given the order when the lookout hailed the deck, and reported a large vessel in sight.

Instantly the Sea Trailer was headed for it, and as quickly the stranger turned to fly.

"He has not the square and trim rig of a vessel-of-war, Mr. Brooks, and his running as he does, from a craft one third his size, proves he must be some large English merchantman, bound to Halifax," said Carl, examining the sail closely through his glass.

"He may be heavily armed for all that, and run to lead as into a trap."

"True, but our long gun will soon bring an answer from him, if he is armed; dress the schooner in all she'll carry, and we'll show him that he need not attempt to fly from us."

Away rushed the Sea Trailer, as though scenting its prey, and away flew the stranger, which now proved to be a large barque.

Had the wind been heavier, the stranger could have made better speed; but, as it was, the light breeze drove the schooner swiftly along, six knots to the hour, while the barque was making but four, though she was one mass of white duck from her decks to the trucks.

Thus several hours passed away, the Sea Trailer steadily gaining, until there was but little over half a league dividing them, but still the barque held on, and though she had changed her course several times, running before the wind for awhile, and then with it on her quarter, she could not shake her persistent pursuer off her trail.

At last, being within good range, Carl said, quietly:

"Throw a shot over him, Mr. Brooks, and we'll see what his colors are, and if they float over an armed deck; if they do, then it will be our time to fly."

CHAPTER XIX.

A TEMPTING OFFER.

THE shot from the bow gun of the Sea Trailer flew over the lofty topmasts of the barque with a shriek that warned its commander that he must show his colors, and up to the peak went the ensign of England.

"Bravo! we've got a prize, and a large one," cried Carl with almost boyish glee, as he gazed upon the stately vessel, and he added:

"Alston, yonder barque is a fast sailer, and in a strong wind would have given us a long chase; but he does not heed our shot and heave to, so send another and cut away some of his top-bamper."

The order was obeyed, and the shot was seen to bury itself in the clouds of snowy duck.

Instantly the barque was seen lessening sail preparatory to rounding to, and a few moments after she lay motionless upon the waters.

A run of ten minutes more and the Sea Trailer, stripped of all but her working-canvas, and with her crew at quarters, and boarders ready, ran slowly alongside of the huge hull, and Carl Manners and two-score men clambered up the high sides and bounded on deck.

To his relief he saw that the barque carried but two small guns, and about thirty men in crew, and advancing toward her captain, who stood near with clouded brow, he said quietly:

"Captain, the misfortunes of war have made your vessel a prize to the American privateer Sea Trailer."

Receiving politeness where he had anticipated rough treatment, caused the sturdy Englishman to answer pleasantly:

"Your fortune, young sir, is in having a craft that can fairly fly; but will your captain come on board, for you may tell him he has captured a rich prize?"

"I am my own master, sir."

"Ah! You captain of a privateer? Well, I don't wonder America gives us a hard fight, when her boys are sea officers, but come into my cabin, my young gentleman, and we'll arrange the terms of surrender," and the Englishman led the way.

At a glance Carl Manners knew that he had indeed made a valuable capture, for the barque was a beautiful vessel and was fitted out with far more than usual elegance in all its cabin appointments, for a piano stood against the transom, a velvet carpet covered the floor, soft divans and chairs lured to repose its occupants, and an air of refinement was upon all.

"What vessel have I had the honor of capturing, captain?" asked Carl with pleased surprise.

"My name, sir, is Ephraim Paddock, my youthful captain, and this vessel is the Lord Manners."

"Ah! my own name is Manners, sir; and you were heading for Halifax, I believe?"

"Yes, sir; that was the port we sailed for, and we are out of London, and if you wish English gold instead of this craft, you can have it, so name your idea of what you think she is worth to you."

"You mean for me to accept a stated sum and release the vessel?"

"Yes, that is just what I mean."

"I prefer the barque; she is a splendid craft, and armed, would make a grand vessel-of-war for my Government, especially, by rigging her in man-of-war style, she can sail like the wind."

"But I will give you a draft on a Halifax bank for double her value, and you can hold us until you send in and get your money," said the captain, anxiously.

"You seem most urgent, my dear captain, but I prefer the barque."

"Say three times the value of vessel and cargo?"

"No, sir."

The Englishman arose and paced to and fro a

minute; then he went into a state-room forward, and Carl heard a whispered conversation.

A minute after he returned to the cabin and said:

"Name your own sum, captain, for the release of my vessel."

"No, sir; I shall hold the barque, and run her into Portland as a prize."

The Englishman seemed in despair, and paced nervously to and fro, starting suddenly when Alston Brook appeared in the companionway.

"Well, sir, what do you wish?" he asked, angrily; but disregarding the question the Sea Trailer's lieutenant said quietly:

"Captain Manners, an American, pressed as a seaman on board this barque, states that she is loaded with most valuable stores and munitions of war, sadly needed by the English army, and the navy, and that there is a British general and his staff on board."

"Is this so, sir?" asked Carl, turning to the English captain; but before he could reply, the state-room door opened, and there came out a tall, dignified man, in the full-dress uniform of a general in the British Army, and approaching Carl, he said, in a courteous tone:

"It is true, sir; this vessel is a British store-ship, I am free to confess, now that I see you will not release her; she became separated in a storm from the man-of-war that was sent as an escort, and I am Lord Temple Manners, a British general, and my staff of fifteen officers accompany me."

"I regret, sir, that I must become your captor, for your own sake, though for my own I rejoice that I have captured so important a prize; but it is my duty to run into Portland and surrender you, and I ask the parole of yourself and officers to make no effort to retake the barque, and I will bestow upon you the same freedom you have enjoyed as passengers."

While Carl was speaking the British general was watching him closely, and when he had finished, said:

"If I mistake not, sir, I heard you tell Captain Paddock that your name was Manners?"

"It is, sir; Carl Manners."

"Carl Manners, indeed! are you an American by birth?"

"I am, sir."

"And your parents if you will pardon my curiosity?"

"Were English, sir."

"And your father's name?"

"Was Mark Manners."

The Englishman seemed deeply moved, and after a moment said:

"Young sir, my father was Lord Carl Manners, and I had a brother Mark."

"He was my father, my lord, for I have often heard of you, sir," said Carl, with feeling.

"Was your father? Is Mark Manners dead?"

"He is, sir, and so is my mother," and Carl's voice trembled, for over him rushed a tide of memories that were most bitter.

"My boy, know then that I am your uncle, for I see in your face the features of your father and your mother; alas! that they and I should have so drifted apart, and you, their son, now be the foe of England."

"I am an American, sir, as my parents were by adoption."

"I honor you for your defense of your native land, my boy; but let me tell you, that as I am childless, upon you fall the title and estates that I hold, and you must go to England and claim them, for, when I die, you are Lord Manners," and the English nobleman laid his arm upon Carl's shoulder in an affectionate way.

"No, sir, I am an American, heart and soul, and the only title I seek is the rank I can carve with my sword, while for riches I little care, and this very prize would bring me wealth; but if you say the vessel is your own, I will release her."

"I cannot in honor say so, my son," frankly answered the general.

"Then I must claim her for my Government; but all personal property that you, your staff, and this worthy captain may possess on board, I will release, and you, my lord, giving me your parole that you will not serve against the United States until exchanged, I will land with all others on this vessel, at Halifax."

"You are a brave and generous fellow, Carl Manners, though you cast aside a title to be an American; but more than you promise, neither myself, or Captain Paddock can ask, so let me grasp your hand, and still say, that should the world go hard with you, in me you shall ever find a friend."

Half an hour after the two vessels were headed for Halifax, and running side by side, the English general and Carl pacing the deck of the barque together, conversing of the past, and the causes that had made Mark Manners leave his native land and seek a home in America.

Arriving off the port at night three of the barque's boats were lowered, and into them got the general and his staff, and Captain Paddock and his crew, with their personal effects, and with heavy hearts they saw the Sea Trailer and its splendid prize stand away southward, leaving them to row up to the town, and report their misfortune.

CHAPTER XX.

RUNNING THE BLOCKADE.

HAVING divided his crew equally, and placed half on board the prize, under Alston Brooks, Carl headed for Portland, fully aware that he would meet with many difficulties in the way of running in; but he was not one to dread danger, and standing off and on until a dark, stormy night, the two vessels then made steadily for the harbor.

To run the blockade of the English fleet was no easy task, but with all snug on board, not a light visible, and sail enough set to drive them swiftly through the rough waters, they stood in, every eye on the lookout for a foe.

The swifter sailer, the Sea Trailer, led the way, her sails so trimmed as to hold her just far enough ahead to be visible from the deck of the barque.

Thus they glided on, the lights of Portland growing brighter and brighter, until all began to hope that they would pass unobserved through the fleet, when there suddenly came a flash off

the port bow, and a shot illumined the deck of a cruiser, not a quarter of a mile from the Sea Trailer.

"Ho! the barque!" came distinctly on the winds, in the clarion voice of Carl Manners.

"Ahoy! the Trailer!" shouted back Alston Brooks.

"Stand right in under full speed; I will engage the cruiser," came the order.

And then came another peal, and another, and a third and fourth, until a broadside had been sent at the Sea Trailer from the strange vessel; but fortunately the rough waters and darkness of the night rendered the aim untrue and every shot flew wild.

But the light of her guns brought a cry to half a hundred lips, and from the decks of both the schooner and barque arose the cry:

"The Tigress! the Tigress!"

"By Heaven! it is Hugh Trevor! I'll signal the barque to press right on, and stand down and engage him," cried Carl Manners.

"But think of the British fleet, captain; they'll run down and pounce upon us," said the junior officer, who was acting in the place of Alston Brooks.

"True; but I believe I could board him and—"

"Half your men, sir, are on the barque, and he is heavier in metal than you are," again said the officer.

"Too true; it would be madness, I know, but I do not wish him to escape me again," answered Carl impatiently.

"You might give him a broadside, sir."

"A broadside! pour a broadside upon Hugh Trevor, Dudley Reid? You know not what you say, for a shot might kill him, and I not see him die; oh, no! I will carry him by boarding only, when the chance comes," and Carl turned to the care of his vessel, for the firing of the Tigress had alarmed the British fleet, and battle-lanterns could be seen flashing in several directions, while Hugh Trevor was heading so as to cross the bows of the Sea Trailer.

But suddenly the Tigress was seen to go quickly about, and stand away from the Sea Trailer's course, Hugh Trevor having suddenly discovered what craft it was he had been firing upon, or catching sight of the barque in her wake, and fearing that it might be an American vessel-of-war, whom it would not be pleasant for him to meet, there in the midst of the English fleet, and not fired upon by them.

Having their own localities well known, the British fleet opened fire in the direction of the schooner and barque, for the night was too dark and stormy for them to be sighted at great distance.

But the shots did no harm, and the Sea Trailer and her prize safely ran the gantlet and dropped anchor before the town, and Carl sent Alston Brooks ashore to report his important capture and safe arrival in port.

"And when do you sail?" asked the lieutenant.

"As soon as you return; the fleet will not expect us to run out to-night, and the storm is increasing; ask for an officer at once to take charge of the barque, as the prize of the privateer Sea Trailer, and report also that the Amer-

ican privateer Tigress, Hugh Trevor, captain, is cruising around among the British vessels, and was seen coming out of Halifax Harbor."

Alston Brooks departed on his errand, and so great was the joy of the commandante at the valuable capture, that he accompanied the lieutenant on board the Sea Trailer to thank the young captain for the service rendered, saying, as he grasped Carl's hand:

"That vessel, sir, is worth a cool ten thousand men to the British Army, and its stores and munitions of war are just what we need. Congress will vote you a medal, sir, and I will see that you and your crew get their prize-money secured."

Carl thanked the American officer for his kind words, and shortly after, with all his crew on board, and a few more whom Alston Brooks had hastily shipped, turned the prow of the Sea Trailer seaward, to face the dangers of the deep.

Though the Sea Trailer passed within almost hailing distance of a large ship of the line, whose crew had again settled down to quietude, she was not discovered, and safely ran the gantlet once more out to blue water, and by daylight had left the bold coast of Maine and the spires of Portland five leagues astern.

Closely watching among the blockading squadron for a sight of the Tigress, Carl was disappointed at not seeing her, and again felt that he had wronged Hugh Trevor in believing him a traitor to his country, and gave him the credit of having boldly run in among the British vessels in the hope of making a capture.

"He's not that brave, Carl; I am convinced he is playing a double game, and the friend of whichever side suits him best; but which way now?" said the suspicious Alston Brooks.

"In the direction of New York, for Hugh Trevor seems to be heading that way; but is not that the glimmer of a sail on the horizon there, just two points off the weather bow?"

"Yes, I see it now, as the rising sun falls upon it."

"Luff a little, helmsman! another point, now turn close, and keep her steady as she is," said Carl, and he went into his cabin for his glass.

When he returned he could see that the vessel was lying to, and watching her steadily for a long while, he called out:

"Mr. Brooks, there are two vessels yonder, lying side by side."

Alston Brooks turned his glass upon the sail in sight, and said, slowly:

"You are right, Carl; it is a large ship, evidently not a vessel-of-war, and beyond her I see the rakish masts of a smaller craft."

"I pray it be the Tigress; crowd on canvas, Alston," and Carl paced to and fro, while the schooner fairly flew over the waters, which were ruffled by a ten-knot breeze.

As the topsails of the strangers arose rapidly above the horizon, it could be seen with the naked eye that another craft lay beyond the one first discovered, and as all eagerly gazed upon them, suddenly a column of smoke arose above the tall masts, then a flame was seen, and a moment after there forged in full view a rakish schooner.

"The Tigress! The Tigress!" cried a number

of voices, as the now well-known privateer was recognized.

"Yes, it is the Tigress, and Hugh Trevor has captured a large prize and set her afire; just see how she burns! But crowd on every stitch of canvas, Alston, for I see that he is determined to avoid me," said Carl Manners.

"Yes, he is certainly flying; and see! he is setting more sail."

"It matters not, I have her in sight now; the Sea Trailer is the fastest sailer, and I shall run Hugh Trevor down, for night is a long way off, and I will be too near for him to dodge me in the darkness," and Carl Manners' eyes flashed with hope of at last being able to keep his vow, made against the man who had blighted his whole life.

CHAPTER XXI.

TRAITOR OR PIRATE.

LONG ere the Sea Trailer arrived in the vicinity of the prize of the Tigress, the large ship was one mass of flames, and the cracking and roaring of the fire reached the ears of those on the schooner.

Having set fire to the vessel the Tigress held away toward the land, hardly visible in the distance and heading so as to allow the Sea Trailer slight advantage, by cutting across toward a given point, an opportunity that Carl Manners determined not to lose.

"Will you not run closer to the burning ship, Carl?" asked Alston Brooks.

"No, for it will be half burned up ere we can arrive, and there is no need; besides I will seize upon the advantage which Trevor has given us," and he ordered the schooner put away so as to gain every inch possible.

"There are several of the crew, sir, who report seeing three men jump from the ship into the water."

"Indeed, Dudley; send them aft and I will question them," replied Carl, and the second officer went forward and soon returned with two seamen.

"Well, my men, what was it you saw?" asked Carl.

"I'll tell you, sir, I was at first afraid my eyes deceived me, for I isn't young any more; but when my messmate here says he seen the same as I did, then I knowed my eyes hadn't lied," said an old, weather-beaten tar.

"And what did you see, coxswain?"

"I saw one man jump from the ship into the sea, shortly after the Tigress left her, and then two more quickly followed, and mayhap a fourth."

"And that's what I seen too, captain," said the other seaman.

Carl looked troubled, and after a moment's silence and thought, turned to Alston Brooks.

"It wouldn't be right to leave these men to die, if by altering our course we can save them; but I hate to lose the time, for the Tigress, whatever she might have been when the British vessel-of-war was after her, does not show herself a slow sailer."

"Shall I head for the burning ship, sir?"

"Yes," and the Sea Trailer was put away for the burning vessel that was now a perfect column of flames.

After a run of half an hour, the lookout in the foretop suddenly cried:

"Raft, ho!"

Instantly every eye was closely searching the waters, and half a mile to leeward of the burning vessel was descried a dark object upon the sea, and clinging to it the forms of three men.

At once the schooner headed for it, and soon luffed up and lay to, while a boat was lowered and sent to the relief of the men, whom, it was now seen, were clinging to a hastily-constructed raft.

A few moments after they came over the schooner's side; three seamen, almost exhausted, but with joy in their faces at their escape.

"Are there any more in the vicinity of the ship?" asked Carl.

"No, sir, we are all that escaped," answered one of the men.

"Then put away after the Tigress once more, Mr. Brooks; and you, my men, tell me who and what you are?"

"We were seamen, sir, on board the American clipper ship, bound from New York to France—"

"An American clipper ship?" asked Carl Manners in surprise.

"Yes, sir; the Lady Washington."

"And what flag did your captor fly?"

"The English, sir."

"And he captured you under the English flag?"

"Yes, sir; but behaved more like a bloody pirate, for most part of our crew were shot after we surrendered, and the captain of the schooner cut our commander down because he threw the dispatches overboard, and, after robbing the ship of everything, he set it on fire; but I and my two messmates here saw your vessel and hid ourselves, determined to make an effort to escape; but the fire soon drove us overboard, and we were going to try and make the land, if you did not pick us up."

"Well, Alston, what do you think of all this?" asked Carl Manners, when the three men had gone forward.

"Just what I have thought, Carl; Hugh Trevor is sailing under an English ensign, or—"

"Or what, Alston?"

"Or the black flag of a pirate," was the stern reply.

"I believe you are right; but I will attack him, did he run into Boston Harbor."

"He won't dare do that; but see, he is changing his course, and—as I live, he is putting about to stand toward us!"

"By the Lord Harry, Alston, you are right! Now may the best man win," and Carl Manners's face shone with the joy he felt that the death-struggle must soon come.

CHAPTER XXII.

A CLEVER RUSE.

As Brete Fairfax and his party wound their way around the beach, the midshipman suddenly called a halt, and said:

"Lads, I have an idea that we can regain possession of Miss Madge without a fight, and it will be then time enough to get to blows; but it must be done through two of you, my friends," and he turned to the half-dozen smugglers, and

the skipper of the chebacca boat seeing his look, answered:

"Just command us, captain."

"Well, my plan is for you, skipper, with one of your men, to take one of the skiffs yonder on the shore and go out to the schooner, and tell the lieutenant in charge that Captain Darrell has sent for the maid of Perth, he having determined to leave her in charge of Captain Kit."

"But suppose the captain is on board, sir?"

"I am confident he is not, for he has gone ere this up to the retreat of Captain Kit; should he be, you can give some excuse for your visit, and, as you are known as one of the Girl Smuggler's under officers they will believe you."

"I'll risk it, sir; and if we get the girl?" answered the skipper.

"Bring her ashore at this point, and we will make for the chebacca boat and run to a cove near by as a hiding-place; that is, you can do so, with Captain Ferris here, for I shall enlist on the schooner, and my friend here, who can tell his commander that we ran up after him, and, as Darrell never saw me by daylight, I can pass muster as a sailor."

"And I will join you, sir," said Skip.

"But will you trust me, sir?" and the prisoner turned to Brete Fairfax.

"I will, for I believe that unfortunate circumstances, not choice, led you to piracy."

"You are right, sir, and I'll not betray you," was the frank response.

"Nor will you regret serving me, instead of Darrell, whose days are numbered; now, skipper, take one of your men, and make all haste to the schooner."

The smuggler obeyed, taking with him a man whom he felt he could wholly trust, and pushing one of the light skiffs into the water, they rowed at steady stroke out to the schooner, which lay at anchor about one hundred and fifty yards off-shore, while the midshipman and the others crouched down in the shadow of the cliff and impatiently awaited the result, especially the anxious father.

Listening attentively they heard the challenge of the officer of the deck, and the answer; then came the order to come alongside.

Over the gangway went the skipper, and the officer of the deck, and who was the boatswain that had deserted from the flagship, said bluntly:

"Well, sir, bring you word from the captain, whether we sail to-night, or be you here for some English cruiser, or that accursed Sea Wizard to nose us out at daybreak?"

"I bring word from Captain Darrell, regarding his fair captive, the maid of Perth," suggestively answered the skipper, not aware whether Darrell had taken her ashore with him or not, and knowing he was treading upon dangerous ground.

"Ah! what has he decided to do with her?"

"To leave her in the charge of Captain Kit, sir."

"A good idea, for she would bring us bad luck as certain as he carried her with us; you can hear her now sniveling like a child."

"I do, sir; will you tell her, please, that I

have come after her, and that Captain Kit will make her more comfortable than she can be here?" and the skipper cast an anxious eye shoreward, fearing each moment to see the captain returning.

Going to the companionway the bluff seaman shouted out:

"Come girl, you're wanted ashore, and it's glad I am of it; get your traps, for there is a boat waiting you."

"Oh, whither would they take me?" cried the maiden, coming on deck.

"To the shore; any place is better for you than this craft, if you take my advice," was the blunt answer.

"True; I will go," and returning to the cabin she threw around her head and shoulders a wrap, and said as she approached the two men, whom the deserter had pointed out to her as her escorts:

"I am ready."

They aided her into their boat, and seizing their oars pulled with a will, and the skiff soon grated upon the shore, and not a moment too soon, for they heard voices approaching down the ravine, and the skipper cried hastily:

"Come, lady, lose no time, for your friends, not Darrell, await you, and it would be death to be taken."

Madge Ferris saw that help was at hand, and the manner of the two men impressing her with the danger they were in, she sprang from the boat and the three dashed along the sandy beach to the shelter of the cliff, and there she was suddenly clasped in her father's arms.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SKIP'S STRATEGY.

"Quick! you have no time to lose, for a party is coming out of the ravine, and I heard Darrell's voice," cried the skipper.

"Then to your little craft, and get her out of the cove as soon as possible: farewell, Captain Ferris; good-by, Miss Madge, I hope we shall meet again; skipper, I shall not forget you and your little crew, if I live; if I die, you will not mind a dead man doing you a favor."

He turned to go, but Madge Ferris sprang toward him:

"You it is, who have saved me from Darrell."

"I helped a little, Miss Madge; but good-by."

"Whither do you go?"

"Your father will tell you," and the young midshipman bounded away, followed by the pirate prisoner, but now no longer a prisoner, and the lad, Skip, while the smuggler skipper hurried the captain and Madge away in another direction.

Gliding along in the shadow of the cliff, they soon saw a group come from out the ravine, and approach the water's edge, and the midshipman said sternly:

"Now, my man, we place our lives in your hand, and trust to luck to get possession of the schooner in some way; remember, present us as shipmates you shipped in the city."

"No, hold!"

It was Skip who spoke, and he grasped an

arm of each as they were about to step forth from their retreat.

"Well, my lad?" asked the middy impatiently.

"Captain Darrell has not all his men with him, I see, so let me go down to the beach, as though I had just come from the ravine, and tell him that Captain Kit bids him return on an important matter."

"Well?"

"You two glide into the ravine and await our coming, and approach, as though to pass, but then seize him; with Darrell in our power I have a plan to take his vessel."

"By Jove, boy, I'll take the risk; but hasten, for see, he's about to get into his boat," cried the middy.

Darting toward the ravine the lad then turned and ran toward the boat, calling out in a voice evidently disguised:

"Captain Darrell! Captain Darrell!"

"Well, sir, what is it?"

Panting as though with fatigue, Skip said:

"Captain Kit desires that you return a moment, sir, upon an important matter she overlooked."

"Always the way with a woman, to forget the most important thing; you men await me here," growled the pirate chief, and he sprang ashore and joined the lad, evidently in no amiable mood.

Together they walked rapidly across the beach, and entered the ravine, where the shadows were deep; but not thirty paces had he gone when the lad suddenly dealt Ned Darrell a stinging blow in the face, and before he could recover from his surprise, he was in the clutch of Brete Fairfax and the reformed pirate, one of whom smothered his face with his coat to prevent outcry.

"One word and you die, Ned Darrell," sternly said the midshipman, and he pressed a pistol against his head, while his two companions bound him with alacrity and skill, and then forced a gag into his mouth.

"Come, we must get out of this or some one may come from the smugglers' retreat," said the middy, and seizing the captive in their arms they hastened along a few paces, until they found a path leading up the hillside.

Up this the sullen, and now terrified chief was dragged, and at its summit they halted, while Brete Fairfax said:

"Now, my lads, your plan has succeeded so far; what is the next move?"

"Await me here while I go on to the retreat."

"But you do not know the way?"

"I do, know the way, for I have it mapped on my heart and brain," was the strange reply of the lad.

"And what then?"

"I will see the Girl Smuggler, and she will aid in the capture of the schooner."

"I doubt it, my boy."

"I will vouch for it, sir."

"Then go ahead; but do not delay us longer than is necessary."

"I will not, sir," and the lad descended the path rapidly and disappeared in the shadow of the ravine, leaving the midshipman and his companion to guard the pirate chief, and

wondering within themselves how it all would end.

Rapidly walking along the ravine for a couple of hundred yards, Skip came to where it widened into a glen, in which grew a dense forest; here he paused a moment and said half aloud:

"Turn squarely to the right was the directions."

This he did, and following a path, he came to a cliff, that seemed to have been split asunder, and into this chasm he boldly entered, and continued his walk until he came to where it terminated abruptly in a cavern, at the entrance to which stood a sentinel in sailor garb.

"Ah! who are you?" and the guard leveled his musket.

"A messenger from Captain Darrell to see Captain Kit," was the reply.

"All right, follow me!" and the guard led the way into the cave, which enlarged as he went, and then opened into a dozen corridors.

"Follow that one," he said, pointing to the right, which a ship's lantern dimly illumined.

Without a word the lad obeyed, and ascending a rude pair of steps he soon came out into the open air once more, and found himself upon a shelf of earth, half an acre in size, and overhung by a cliff, at the base of which stood a cabin, from the open door of which streamed a bright light.

Approaching the rude hut, the youth halted and glanced within, and his eyes fell upon a form lying indolently in a hammock.

It was a rude, but not uncomfortable home, this retreat of Captain Kit, the Girl Smuggler, and a secluded one; but though she was alone, a curtain that hung at the back of the cabin concealed the entrance to a cave, which led to a ravine, in which dwelt her band, when on shore, and a signal would summon to her aid in a moment's time, two-score brave men; or if attacked by the way that the lad had come, she could retreat through the cavern and ravine and reach the sheltered creek where lay her sloop securely hidden, in five minutes.

Looking in at the door his eyes staring, and whole form trembling, the youth stood an instant, and then from his lips broke one word:

"Sister!"

The woman started from her hammock, and her face turned deadly pale, while she said hoarsely:

"Great God! I distinctly heard my name called; or was it a dream?"

"Sister Kittie!"

With a bound Captain Kit sprang to the door, just as the lad entered.

Seeing him she started back, when in thrilling tones he cried:

"Kittie, my sister, it is I—Meta."

"Meta Moore! *you here?*" and Captain Kit laid her hand upon the curly head and gazed earnestly into the handsome face.

"Forgive me, Kittie; but I have so longed to see you, and learning only of late that you were here and—"

"What more did you learn, girl?" asked the woman, almost fiercely.

"I know all, my sister; that *you are the famous Captain Kit*," said the girl, for in the

supposed lad the reader has doubtless recognized the deserted wife of Ned Darrell, for wife she really was.

"Oh, God! that you should know this, Meta; but who told you, and how came you here?"

"He told me."

"He! Whom do you mean?"

"Ringold."

"Great God! have you seen that man?" cried the woman, almost savagely.

"Yes; I met him only lately in New York."

"And where is he now?"

"He is in New York."

"Oh, ho! my gallant Ringold, your days are numbered, for now I will find you. Meta, you knew that man when he sought me in our home; then he was believed an honorable man, yet I found him, after I ran away with him, the basest of the base; ay, he was the secret leader of this very band of smugglers, and to this very place he brought me.

"Some time ago he deserted me, though he tried to make me believe him dead, and thus was it that I became the leader of the Montauk smugglers.

"I have sought him in Boston where we first lived, but almost believed him dead; but now you tell me he lives."

"Yes; I met him, and though I was a girl when he came to our New England home, I recognized him, and asked for you, for I have so longed to know what had been your fate.

"With a sneer, he told me you had deserted him, and was none other than Captain Kit, the Montauk smuggler, and he it was who told me how to find you, and fortunate accident brought me here, for I, too, have a sad story of wrong to tell, and now have in my power the one who wronged me, and who is none other than Ned Darrell, the—"

"Ned Darrell! that man?" and Captain Kit's eyes blazed.

"Yes," and Meta went on to tell of her love for him, and how, disregarding the advice of her parents, she had run away with him, and the misery it had brought upon her.

"And he is now in your power, Meta?"

"Yes, guarded by the midshipman of whom I spoke, and the idea struck me that you could get possession of his vessel and return it to the American Government, thereby gaining a pardon for yourself."

"It can, and it shall be done," said Captain Kit, and stepping to the side of the cabin she pulled thrice what seemed to be a bell-rope.

The result was almost magical, for nearly two-score of men came dashing into the cave from out of the cabin, and in their hands they carried cutlasses and pistols.

"Lads, I have work for you; come!" and Captain Kit led the way out of the cabin, by the path that Meta, her disguised sister, had come.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A BOLD STROKE.

UPON the way back to the spot where Meta had left Midshipman Fairfax and his prisoner, Captain Kit learned from her sister how cruelly Ned Darrell had left her, and how she had de-

termined, disguised as a boy, to track him down and be revenged upon him.

"Don't imbrue your hands with his blood, Meta, for his piracies will hang him, as will Ringold's deeds cost him his life, so that we will both be avenged; once these two men are dead, I am content to return to the old home with you, and cheer the old age of our parents, for well I know, they will not cast us out of their hearts," said Captain Kit, whose past life flooded in full force heart and brain at sight of her sister.

Arriving in the ravine, Meta signaled, and Brete Fairfax and his comrade came down the path, dragging the prisoner after them.

At the sight of Captain Kit, the midshipman bowed politely, and glanced at the crowd behind her, but the Smuggler Queen allowed him no time for thought, for in her quick terse way, she said:

"I am glad to see you back, sir, and to learn through this lad that you rescued the fair maid of Perth from the power of Darrell the pirate, whom you have made prisoner."

"Yes, Captain Kit, and with your aid I am confident we can take the schooner," replied the middy.

"There is no doubt of it; you say the boats' crew await their captain?"

"Yes, at the beach: about a dozen of them."

"And those mutinous hounds I had in irons are on my sloop, which was to sail around and deliver them on board— Oh! I have a good plan. Here, Dolon?"

"Yes, Captain Kit," and one of the smugglers stepped from the crowd.

"Run across yonder point and tell Brutis to hold the Will-o'-the-Wisp, until I come."

Away darted the messenger, and then Captain Kit said:

"Now, my lad, you go to the boats' crew and bid them return to bring some smugglers' goods their captain has taken charge of for me; the thieves will bite at the bait, and we will ambush them, and then the schooner is ours, for there are not forty men on board."

Meta, whom the midshipman and the others still supposed to be a lad, departed on her errand, and within five minutes, the crouching smugglers in the ravine saw them approaching.

"Halt! or you die!"

It was Brete Fairfax, whose stern command rung out, and, in dire dismay the entrapped men threw up their hands in token of surrender.

"Bind them, and bring them along," ordered Captain Kit, and it was quickly done, and the party, with their prisoners, followed the beach shore for some distance until they came to a wooded point of land, across which the Smuggler Queen led them.

Reaching the other shore they found the Will-o'-the-Wisp lying at anchor near by, and a boat quickly transferred them to its decks, for the messenger sent by Captain Kit had headed the sloop off, just as it was going around into the other cove to place the other men on board, that had been kept in irons since the night of the affair on the beach, in which Brete Fairfax had played so gallant a part.

"Take the gag from Darrell's mouth, and throw him and his men all in the hold," ordered Captain Kit, and the hatch having been closed upon them, the Will-o'-the-Wisp raised anchor and stood out of the cove.

At its entrance a sail was sighted inshore, which was at once pronounced to be the cne-bacca boat, and it was called alongside by a signal from the Smuggler Queen, and Madge Ferris and her father received a warm welcome, and the maiden was sent into the cabin, while the captain avowed his determination to join in the attack upon the schooner.

Running into the inlet, or cove, where the schooner was at anchor, there suddenly came a loud hail in the tones of the deserter boatswain:

"What sloop is that?"

"The Will-o'-the-Wisp, with the schooner's crew!"

"Ay, ay, lay to, and I'll send boats aboard of you," was the reply; but with a skillful maneuver, Captain Kit, who stood at the helm, laid the sloop alongside, and in an instant grapnels were thrown, and Brete Fairfax shouted in ringing voice:

"Boarders, follow me!"

Half a hundred men in an instant almost, leaped upon the schooner's decks, and the surprised pirates were cut down as fast as they rallied, and driven aft, where for a few moments a fierce fight was made under the boat-swain.

But the clarion voice of the midshipman, and the ringing cry of Captain Kit, urged the smugglers on, and in a short while the craft was in their hands, and the remnant of the freebooters begging for quarter.

"Strike no man who begs mercy," cried Captain Kit, and the order was obeyed, while Brete Fairfax muttered:

"It will but leave more ornaments for the yard-arm, for every one of them will hang."

"Now, sir, the schooner is yours, and, as I have no further use for the Will-o'-the-Wisp, I surrender her to you two, asking only a pardon for my crew, and a berth in the navy for them," said Captain Kit.

"I can readily pledge them the pardon, after the services they have rendered; but you, Captain Kit, what will you do?"

"Ask passage for myself and this lad, who goes with me to New York; there I leave you forever; but I must have your pledge as an officer, that my men will receive no punishment."

"I give it willingly; now let us sail, for this is a dangerous locality, as the British fleet is not far away."

"I beg a short delay, until I return to my retreat," and Captain Kit was rowed ashore, Meta accompanying her, while the midshipman devoted the time of waiting, in clearing the decks of the dead, putting the prisoners in irons, and looking after the wounded as well as he could.

Madge and her father also came on board the schooner, and Captain Kit returning soon after, bearing his personal effects, the two vessels headed for New York, where Captain Kit was landed with her still disguised sister, and when daylight broke, Captain Royal Dean of the Sea Wizard was both surprised and delighted to behold the stolen store-schooner anchored not far

off, and under her lee the famous smuggling craft Will-o'-the-Wisp.

Soon after he received a visit from the gallant midshipman, and from him learned the story of his adventures, after which, accompanied by Captain Ferris and the maid of Perth, they rowed ashore to take breakfast at the Keel and Anchor Inn, and tell the important tidings to the old colonel, his daughter Agnes, and Clarette, the sister of Carl, the Boy Runaway.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE CONFLICT.

HAVING shown how gallantly Brete Fairfax, the midshipman, kept his pledge to hunt down Darrell, the pirate, and the smugglers of Montauk, I will now return to that other boy hero, for he was scarcely more, Carl Manners, whose swift craft was hanging determinedly upon the trail of Hugh Trevor.

When the Tigress was seen to put about suddenly, as though to stand back and attack the Sea Trailer, it was at first believed that such was her intention; but a closer look proved that she was making for the open sea with all speed.

And the cause of her suddenly going about was soon discovered, when out from the land was descried a large vessel-of-war carrying the United States flag.

"Crowd on all canvas, Alston, and we will follow the Tigress, for under no circumstances would I have the cruiser yonder overhaul her," was Carl Manners's order.

"Hugh Trevor feels guilty, or he would never run from a vessel flying the same flag he professes to fight under," said Alston Brooks, and he held the Sea Trailer on her course unwaveringly, for he was as anxious as was his young captain to have the affair with Hugh Trevor ended.

If the cruiser had any idea of at first following the nimble-heeled Tigress, which it took for an English privateer, it soon abandoned it, especially when she saw that it would be a useless chase, and that in the Sea Trailer, showing the Stars and Stripes, the flying schooner had a foe on her track that would prove her equal.

And on the two schooners dashed, the Tigress making straight out to sea, and the Sea Trailer persistently following, until it devolved itself into a stern chase, which all sailors know to be a long one.

All through that day the pursued and pursuing rushed on, the Sea Trailer gaining, yet so slowly that hours would pass before she could creep half a mile nearer.

But, as twilight settled down upon the sea still a little over a league divided them, and Hugh Trevor was in hopes of throwing off his deadly foe under cover of the night, for his coward heart cared not to try conclusions with the man he had so persistently dogged to ruin.

But every eye on the Sea Trailer was kept wide open, and the Tigress was still held in sight until the moon arose and lighted up the sea.

Then Hugh Trevor changed his course several times, trying to find that his vessel was the fleetest either close-hauled, before the wind, or with a free sheet, but whichever way he tried,

the Sea Trailer hung in his wake, slowly but surely gaining.

And all through the night the chase kept on until the Tigress held but a little less than two miles the lead, and Hugh Trevor began to count the hours when the conflict must surely come, unless the Sea Trailer could in some way be thrown off the scent.

"Those who have said the Tigress was not fast, Alston, did not know her," remarked Carl Manners on the morning of the second day of the chase, as he stood watching his enemy through his glass.

"No, for she is as fleet as a bird, and no other craft I know could have kept ahead of the Sea Trailer this long. Ha! there comes a shot."

It was true; the Tigress was showing her teeth to see if the Sea Trailer was too far off to feel her bite.

But the shot fell short, and another also, so that Hugh Trevor awaited several hours before he again fired, and then he found he was within range, for, with a ricochet, the ball fell upon the deck of the Sea Trailer, and, nearly spent, struck a gun and then rolled into the lee scuppers.

And again and again the iron messengers came from the Tigress, the Sea Trailer holding silently on, to the great chagrin of the crew.

At last a shot came very near carrying away the foretopmast, and Alston Brooks called out in alarm:

"He'll cripple us so that we cannot escape, Carl, so let me open on him, too."

"He must not escape, so open with the bow gun; but mind you, Brooks, fire only at his rigging."

"Ay, ay," and a shot from the pivot-gun, mounted on the bows of the Sea Trailer, did good service, for it cut away the halyards of the mainsail, which descended to the deck with a run, causing the Tigress to lose several minutes of time which was fatal, for her pursuer pressed swiftly on, and shot after shot was sent into her rigging, until Hugh Trevor felt that he was brought to bay, and felt that at last the death-struggle had come.

And, as if disdaining longer to hide the true character of his vessel, or driven to despair, he hauled down the Stars and Stripes from his peak, and up in their place went the *black flag of the pirate*.

A yell of fury and joy commingled broke from the Sea Trailer's crew at sight of this sable sign of a red career of crime, and they went to quarters with a determination to die, rather than strike to a cruel buccaneer.

Arming himself with his cutlass and pistols, Carl Manners came on deck, and then said briefly to his crew:

"Men, you see the nature of yonder craft; there will be no mercy shown you, so show no mercy but to one man: that man is Hugh Trevor, her captain, and he must hang for his crimes."

Another cheer greeted the words of the youthful commander, and the two schooners now being within half a mile, the fight became general, for the men of the Sea Trailer could no longer be restrained from firing upon their foe, and it was more than Carl Manners could ask

of them, though he dreaded that each discharge of his guns would cheat the gallows of its just prey.

Nearer and nearer the two schooners approached each other, their guns dealing death-blows, but the Sea Trailer seeming to bear a charmed existence, as the Tigress's shots flew wide of her, while Carl Manners could see that he was punishing his foe fearfully.

At length they came together, the grapnels were cast, and with a ringing cry for boarders to follow him Carl Manners was upon the decks of the Tigress.

And right gallantly was he seconded by his crew, who beat back the desperate horde of buccaneers, and gained a footing, from which it was impossible to dislodge them.

Step by step Carl Manners cut his way aft, for he had his eye upon the form of Hugh Trevor, who was in vain urging his men to face their foes and show no quarter.

At length the two captains met—the Boy Runaway, and Hugh Trevor, and with a clash their blades came together; but, whether the knowledge of how he had wronged Carl Manners unnerved him, or that he was not his equal as a swordsman, could not be told; but after a few passes, he was disarmed, and throwing himself upon him, in an instant the escaped convict had the irons he had worn upon the wrist of his bitterest enemy.

With the knowledge of their captain's fall, the crew of the Tigress shrieked lustily for mercy, which, after awhile, the infuriated Sea Trailers showed, though they seemed more anxious to cut down the last one of the pirates, who, under the guise of privateersmen had known neither friend nor foe in their greed for gold.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ROYAL DEAN RECEIVES A LETTER.

SEVERAL days after the combat at sea between the Tigress and Sea Trailer, the Sea Wizard took a cruise up the Sound and out into the Atlantic without molestation, for the English blockading fleet had temporarily been removed for some cause, and all eyes scanned the blue waters, when the lookout reported a sail in sight.

Rapidly it came on, and as the Sea Wizard stood down to meet it, Royal Dean and Brete Fairfax, who stood by his side, and wore the uniform of a junior lieutenant, saw that it was a swift-sailing schooner.

"In rig and hull it looks like Trevor's schooner, the Tigress," said Captain Dean.

"It is the Tigress, sir, and she walks as though she had been in a severe action, as I see her more closely," answered Brete Fairfax, whose gallant recapture of the store-schooner and Darrell, the pirate, had gained him promotion.

A short while more and the two vessels were near each other, and both lying to, a boat put off from the schooner, bearing an officer whose arm was worn in a sling and whose face was pale, haggard and bore traces of great suffering.

It was Alston Brooks, and he brought to Captain Dean a letter, that in the privacy of his cabin, and with only the bearer and Brete Fairfax present he read aloud, and which was as follows:

"AMERICAN PRIVATEER SEA TRAILER,"
"AT SEA."

"CAPTAIN ROYAL DEAN:—

"MY DEAR SIR:—Of my escape from prison, where injustice and bitter foes had sent me, and my capture of the Maid of Perth, you are doubtless long ere this aware, so I will not tire you with the story, but go on to relate that I safely ran the gantlet of the British fleet, and soon after fell in with the wreck of what had once been an English brig, but the crew of which, with the exception of two officers and two men, had been robbed and massacred by Hugh Trevor.

"The brig's guns armed my craft, which was rechristened the Sea Trailer, and from her hold I released thirty American prisoners, some of whom now form my crew.

"The capture by me of the British store-ship, Lord Manners, with General Lord Manners on board, you have doubtless heard through the official dispatches of the Portland commandante, so I will go on to say, that falling in with the Tigress off Halifax, and which I saw come out of Halifax Harbor without being fired upon, I saved her from capture by a sloop-of-war, and afterward seeking her, after a chase of two days, brought her to action, Hugh Trevor not fighting me under the American colors, but under the black flag of the pirate.

"My first officer, who was severely wounded, and I fear will lose his arm, will give you full particulars, proving that from the day Trevor sailed from New York, he became an enemy to both England and America, and in fact a *pirate*, playing for his own safety, into the hands of both Governments; this will be proven by his own men, whom I send as prisoners under Lieutenant Brooks.

"Having vowed to take the life of Hugh Trevor, for his past crimes against me and mine, *I kept my vow well*, for I strung him up to the yard-arm of my vessel, the very day of his capture, unheeding his prayers for mercy, and thus ridding the United States of a disgrace to the commission he bore, and the seas of a vile and cruel wretch.

"The Tigress I send in as a prize, while I will continue at sea, striking any blow in my power for my country against her foes, and, when I have won a name that will gain me pardon from the brand of an escaped convict now resting upon me I will return—but not before.

"With respect,

"CARL MANNERS,

"Commanding Privateer Sea Trailer."

From Alston Brooks Royal Dean then learned more fully all that had happened, and the two vessels put back to New York, where the letter of Carl Manners was placed before the admiral, and its truth verified by the prisoners taken, and the seamen rescued by the Sea Trailer from the clipper ship destroyed by the Tigress.

"The boy deserves it, and shall receive his pardon, I pledge my word, though I do not feel that he has at heart been guilty of the crime of murder for which he was sentenced," said the old admiral warmly, and Royal Dean left the flagship with a happy heart, to tell Clarette Manners the good news regarding her daring brother.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CONCLUSION.

AFTER three long years of bitter struggles, peace was declared between the United States and Great Britain, and the sea and shore no longer echoed with the thunders of war.

And in these three years changes had come to those who have figured in the pages of my romance, for Captain Royal Dean has taken unto himself a wife, the sweet Clarette Manners, and

settled down in an elegant mansion on Staten Island, while Agnes Benedict, whose father, the hospitable landlord of the Keel and Anchor Inn, had died, had found a home with the one she had so kindly sheltered, when sorrow and trouble came upon her in the loss of her mother, and the incarceration of her noble father in prison.

And Alston Brooks, with his noble wife, to whom Carl Manners owed his escape from prison, dwells not far distant from Captain Royal Dean, while Lieutenant Brete Fairfax won the heart of pretty Madge, the maid of Perth, and they were married just before the closing of the war.

As for Captain Kit, and her equally unfortunate sister Meta, they remained in New York until after Darrell, the pirate, was hanged on Gibbet Island, with a number of his crew, and then, being unable to discover the whereabouts of Ringold, the false lover, who had made a loving maiden a smuggler captain, they departed for the home of their parents it was said, and it is to be hoped that they brought joy at last upon the hearts of those upon whom had fallen so much of sorrow.

"And Carl Manners, the young commander of the Sea Trailer; what of him?" I hear the reader ask.

One day some weeks after the declaration of peace, a war-worn schooner ran into New York Harbor and dropped anchor off the Keel and Anchor Inn.

From their homes Royal Dean and Alston Brooks had been watching it coming, and a small boat quickly carried them alongside, for in the tall form, and darkly-bronzed, but strangely handsome, yet stern face, they had recognized Carl Manners whose name had become famous the world over for his many daring deeds upon the sea.

"Come, Carl, you are no longer branded as a convict, for here is your pardon from the President, which I have had awaiting your arrival, for we have daily looked for you. Come, and you will find a warm welcome from Clarette, and also Agnes Benedict, who is with us," said Royal Dean.

"And from every one, for what a name you have won in the Sea Trailer, Carl, while no one regrets that you kept your vow to kill Hugh Trevor!" added Alston Brooks.

Carl Manners's face darkened at the memory of the past; but he gladly accompanied Royal Dean home, where he soon folded in his arms his dearly loved sister, from whom he had been so long separated.

And from Agnes Benedict the greeting he received caused his heart to throb with joy, for he felt that he was beloved by one who was beautiful and noble enough to win the heart of any man.

And win his heart did Agnes Benedict, and with great pomp and rejoicing they were married, six months after his return; and their bridal trip was to England whither Carl was called by the death of Lord Manners for upon him the title descended—a title he cast aside, preferring rather to be an American, and be handed down to posterity as the boy commander of the famous Sea Trailer.

THE END.

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